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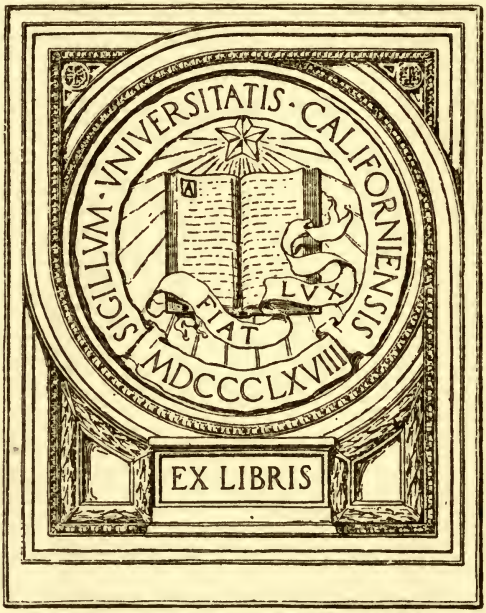

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THE MAN OF PROMISE

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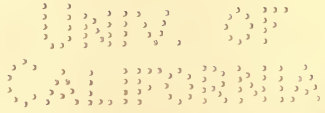
THE MAN OF PROMISE

BY

WILLARD HUNTINGTON WRIGHT



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THE MAN OF PROMISE

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THE MAN OF PROMISE

I

THE fever of commercial enterprise and extension had never inflamed the blood of Greenwood. The city lay in a coign of the foothills through which the Susquehanna had pierced an uneven course. The river ran at the foot of the town which spread out comfortably, without regard for distances, to the north. Beyond the green valley where the white houses grouped themselves, and partially flanking it on the east and west, the green hills rose and undulated into the distance, like great swells of the sea. On the south bank of the river, the hills ascended more abruptly, their sinuous crests modulating into the perspective of distance. Geographically, Greenwood possessed an air of solitude and isolation. This was emphasized by the character of its houses, the majority of which had been built in early colonial times. They were spacious and simple houses, dignified and rarely ornate, set in the centre of large gardens. They possessed a serene, if decadent, atmosphere attesting to old-world influence.

Greenwood had retained its heritage of early culture—a culture transplanted from Europe during the political and religious upheavals in the early part of the nineteenth century. Its inhabitants had been people of means and imperturbable ideals. The families were mainly of gentle stock, and for over three generations had been but little contaminated by the hectic march of a new-world progress. They had not comprised that body of adventurous

pioneers who had crossed the Atlantic in search of spoil, and consequently had not scattered throughout the regions to the west and south. Insulated by unambitious instincts, their children had intermarried and preserved the tradition. Many of the families still held the original grants to their property which, nearly a hundred years before, had been ceded to their forebears by the Dutch government. And though Greenwood had long since overrun its early boundaries and trickled out into the foothills—until now it was a city of nearly 15,000—it still preserved its sense of leisure and its quiet dignity.

The government of the township had remained in the hands of the older families who, more than once, had successfully warded off commercial interlopers. Factories and other enterprising establishments whose presence change the qualifying adjective of a city from "dead" to "flourishing," had been compelled to seek quarters in neighbouring towns. Furthermore, those institutions of commerce which automatically develop internally along with the increase of a city's population, had been discouraged by inadequate transportation routes. The people of this isolated city came and went but little, and the branch railway, which had supplied their needs in the early days, had remained singularly unchanged during the passing years. The great march of progress, except for one or two half-hearted flirtations which had been straightway discouraged, had utterly ignored Greenwood's existence.

Yet the city had grown in a slow, lackadaisical manner. Newcomers, once they had settled in those quiet streets and breathed the atmosphere of the contented and uneager populace, fell into the ways of the city and perpetuated its customs. No gross, unlovely buildings, loud with machinery, hemmed in its outskirts. No grain towers or factory chimneys reared their gaunt heads among the white cottages of the suburbs. No tall hotels, with

ugly rows of windows, breasted the main streets. Transient visitors were few: there was no reason for their presence in Greenwood. But every year, from the great metropolis in the south and from the state's capital in the north, successful men with tranquil inclinations, retiring from the activities of business, brought their families hither and established homes in which to pass their remaining years. Thus the city had grown quietly and unostentatiously, preserving its atmosphere of suavity and good breeding and maintaining its residential richness and beauty.

Because of its placidity and topographical charm, Greenwood had been selected by the State as an educational centre. For twenty years the brick building on Oak Hill had been sending forth teachers to all parts of the country. The State College stood at the foot of the hills, just in the rear of the city. It was a large, low building of golden brick, set on the pinnacle of a spacious, open mound. On all sides of it was green lawn, unbroken save for two long, rectangular flower-beds which ran parallel, one on either side of the wide brick walk leading to the school's entrance. The building had been augmented many times in recent years to make room for its steadily increasing enrolment. But the brick of which the additions were built aged quickly beneath the rain and snow, so that they, too, soon melted into the city's spirit of unmodernity.

Joseph West's grandfather had been one of the early settlers in the city. An exile for his beliefs, he had fled from Holland at the overthrow of that country's older monarchy, to escape the wrath of an upstart prince. Here he had dropped his noble name and adopted the one of West which symbolized both his defeat and his hope. He had married a distant daughter of the Bourbons, who had hoped to find in the new world beyond the Atlantic, an escape from the horrors of 1789, but from whose eyes the sorrow of that tragic period never parted.

For two generations their ideals had been preserved. Their heritage, immaculate and unimpeached, had passed on through their children to their children's children.

Joseph West, now the only living grandchild, was a man of silent mien and devout habits. He ignored the heresies of modern thought and the agitations and desires of his day, following closely the narrow path of his tradition. Greenwood pleased him, and he had always remained there, for solitude was acceptable to him. In his young manhood he had gone abroad to study in European universities. He possessed considerable learning and no meagre talent. The position he had held for eight years as an instructor in the Teachers' State College, fitted in nicely with his aspirations and accomplishments. His superiors, for the most part aware of his capabilities, respected him. It was not, therefore, surprising to his associates that he should have received the appointment of Director of the school at the death of the slow-moving and ponderous-minded Emsley, whose stringent formalism had governed and moulded the institution's ideals from its inception.

West, though barely thirty-five, had undertaken his duties with a greater devotion and efficiency than had been hoped for. He saw in his position a rare opportunity of making his influence felt throughout the land. His was not the academic and unimaginative personality possessed by his predecessor. A deeper and wider vision inspired him. He despised the narrow educational methods of his day, and had formulated broader theories of culture. He saw how strongly the dictates of commercialism influenced education and how surely the ideals of genuine culture were being driven out of the country's schools by utilitarian needs. His aims were high, perhaps too high for so young and active a country; but he had succeeded in instilling his lofty principles into those who came under his immediate jurisdiction.

In a few short years he had given a new impulse to his

work. Without opposition he had introduced into the school curricula a spirit somewhat Hellenic in import. He felt, not without justification, that his task of abating the passionate Philistinism of his time had not been entirely fruitless. It was a silent and subterraneous influence he exerted. He was wise enough to know that open reforms would be discouraged by his board of superiors. But he comforted himself with the knowledge that his influence was greater in his present position than it would have been in the universities. Here he dealt, not merely with a small portion of the youth of the country, but with the leaders and makers of schools. He felt, therefore, that his cultural ideals had a far-reaching effect; and the routine of his life satisfied his intellectual aspirations.

For five years he had been married. He lived simply and quietly with his young wife and his mother, a brooding invalid, in the old house which had belonged to his grandfather. Amelia West was a silent, competent woman, capable of understanding her husband and of appreciating his quiet ambitions. She gave him what little companionship his solitary nature needed, and justified the dependence he felt in her. Her personality was a strong one, but in his presence she buried it in his own preoccupations. Though her influence over him was great, it was the influence which arises, not from initiative and aggression, but from an insinuating and intelligent humility. Except for his deep friendship for Caleb Matthews, the instructor of ancient languages, at the State College, Joseph West's personal interests were meagre and unimportant. Nine o'clock in the morning found him at his desk; at half-past four in the afternoon, his work over, he walked home through the shaded streets. The remainder of the day was spent on the broad veranda overlooking his garden-terrace which sloped to the river. Evenings he prepared his lectures. A melancholy and comfortable life—but a life which touched

the uttermost boundaries of his desires and inclinations.

It was now late April. A warm wind, presaging the advent of summer, swept through the maples along the river and entered into the mild blood of the people. The lawn about the school-house had reached its height of vividness, and the flower-beds were alive with brilliant reds and blues. Although not yet four o'clock, Joseph West walked down between the rectangles of gay blossoms, his step a trifle brisker than usual. At his side was Caleb Matthews, who, though much younger than West, had slightly grey hair and the thin, sharp features of a prematurely old man. These two had been friends for years. Matthews's hand was upon West's arm, and he was talking earnestly, after his habitual manner. But the other seemed not to hear him; and when they came to the foot of Oak Street where their ways divided, the young Director turned and walked away with scarcely a nod.

He was nearly running when he turned into River Street and saw the pillars of his home gleaming white through the fresh, washed green of the young maples. The neighbours remarked his haste, a thing unusual and incompatible with his calm and orderly temperament. But he looked to neither right nor left, and hastening up the front steps and across the veranda, opened the door and entered. His blood was full of the same emotions, though he did not know it, that nearly thirty-five years ago had possessed his father who, like himself, had hurried home one late afternoon and nervously disappeared into the house.

That night Joseph West sat for an hour at the window in his study, motionlessly watching the star-light on the river. Then suddenly, as if he had forgotten something he intended doing, he turned to his desk and slowly wrote these words in his diary—and the handwriting was bolder and more methodical than that of the other notes on the page:

"It is fitting that the month of April should bring me the deepest and greatest of all my joys. This season of new life for all the trees and flowers has brought unto me also a new life, more blessed and more glorious than all of the Spring's bourgeonings. My heart is full as I write these words in the solitude of an April night, for to-day there has been born to me my first child, a son. *My son!* And in accordance with the hopes which your dear mother and I have harboured throughout the past months, your name shall be Stanford. Into every letter of it is woven a deep and lasting love and an eternal hope that you will never bring dishonour upon it but will live always in the fear of God. Stanford West—thus shall you be known on earth; and in the hearts of your mother and of me, your father, will ever burn the desire that you will be upright and strong; that in your early youth you will show the promise of true greatness; and that, in your riper years, you will fulfil that promise to the honour of us who loved you and nurtured you."

II

THERE are old women living in Greenwood to-day who, if you ask them, will recall the tragic silence which characterized Stanford West during the years of his infancy. He was long past the age when most children begin to chatter before he articulated a single word. His mother wept in secret for what she thought was backwardness in her only child, a child for whom she had waited five years and who, now he had come, was so silent and so bereft of that playfulness for which every woman yearns and watches. In his early youth Stanford West rarely smiled; it was difficult to make him appear happy. Even his few periods of animation were brief; immediately he would settle into a state of uninterestedness. Later on, when he began to focus his attention on the activities round him, he showed but little enthusiasm. He looked upon the world with grave eyes, and kept silent.

When old enough to walk, he exhibited no inclination to be with other children; he would go to his mother and sit by her without a word. The young woman, frightened by his air of melancholy, would take him in her arms and ask him innumerable questions, trying to make him talk. But he answered only with monosyllables, often without looking at her. In the night, when the child was asleep, she would confide her anxieties and fears to her husband. Joseph West merely laughed quietly, and told her it was the child's nature. The boy's eyes were sombre and thoughtful; his hands were pliable and sensitive; his head was well-moulded;—and the father, who saw these things and understood them, comforted

the unhappy woman. He loved his son, whose breathing he could now hear in the small bed at his side. He loved him with a greater affection than he had thought possible. He felt that between them there had already grown up an intimate if unspoken companionship. He, too, had been a silent child; his father had often chidden him with his youthful reticence: and a gregarious instinct had never been part of his nature. He believed, therefore, that he understood the child. Every Sunday Stanford West would walk with his father in the fields beyond the river and up the winding path which led to the shaded fastnesses of the hills. Always on crossing the bridge the boy would stop and gaze for a moment down the long avenue of lazy water, with its high green ramparts of old trees. When the hill's summit was reached, he would sit silent, his small hand in his father's, and stare solemnly down into the checquered valley. Neither of them would speak. The man knew what was going on in the child's mind, and he did nothing to distract the silent worshipper, but waited until the young soul should have its fill of the beauty before it.

So, while the father rejoiced over the solitude of the boy's nature, the mother grieved and would not be consoled. At length, the anxious woman, desperate with worry, began to plan. In large measure she put the blame for her son's quietude on the influence cast by the invalidism of Joseph West's mother. Therefore she decided to enliven the grey atmosphere of the home. She would have visitors; the children of the neighbourhood would find an irresistible welcome in that great, spacious house. Thus she thought to change her child's lonely habits. But even this lean hope was dissipated. The invalid, whose sombre presence the young wife had contrived to counteract, irremediably lost her mind as the result of a violent accident. There followed eight cruel months of suffering; then a final grave attack to which she succumbed. After the accident the peace and serenity

of the home vanished. The younger woman's plans for her son were abandoned, for the house harboured a nightmare whose cold hand lay day and night upon the other members.

Stanford West was then barely five years old. Frail and sensitive, he did not escape the horrors of those months. They spelled themselves indelibly upon his mind—a mind susceptible to influences and quick to take impressions. For years afterward he remembered vividly the hurried footsteps on the stairs in the night, the excited, strained tones behind locked doors, the stifled weeping, the woe in his father's eyes, the agonized cries from the chamber, the sudden silence, the long casket in the living-room and the sombre figures of the neighbours who passed before it, the doleful hymns and the kneeling clergyman, the long procession through the rain. . . . He had been shaken and dumbfounded by it all. His silence was deeper than before. His eyes were more grave; and he would stand longer on the bridge as he looked down the river. In him had suddenly been born the consciousness of defeat. During the days following his grandmother's death he clung close to his father, walking to the corner with him in the mornings, and waiting solemnly for him on the veranda in the afternoons.

When Stanford West was old enough he was sent to the public school. His mother hoped that the enforced fraternity with other boys would enliven his interest in the things which heretofore he had so continually avoided. Despite the assurances of Joseph West and his calm air of contentment regarding the boy, she nevertheless felt that her child's gravity and lack of communicativeness were abnormal. Often she stood, with a sense of tightening about her throat, watching him with other children. He always sat apart, his face resting on his hands, while the others, singing and calling, ran to and fro in the mazes of a childish romp. There was no distaste in his attitude; rather did it epitomize disinclination.

Joseph West was always pleased with recitals of the boy's aloofness, but his wife did not understand. She only realized that her boy was not like the others. There was small comfort in her husband's reiterations that the child differed from other boys because he was finer than they; because he was more thoughtful; because he would some day be greater than them all, and could not be measured by the same standards. She did not want him different. She feared his dissimilarity even though convinced that his mind was not retarded—a fact of which she now had ample evidence in his quickness to understand and to learn what she taught him. She still resented what she viewed as eccentricities in his conduct.

The truth was she was following unconsciously the deepest instinct in her nature. She was conservative in all things, and when the consciousness of motherhood had come to her, this conservatism in petty matters had suddenly developed into a sense of racial conservation. What she really feared was that her son might find paths she could not follow. The preservation of the type man, as she had known it, was her vital, if unguessed, concern. Therefore, when she pictured her son as a man different from his father, she was frightened. It was the unknowable, the new, the unprecedented, which appalled her. She hoped with singular passion that the influence of school would whittle the child's nature into a replica of the boys about him. She, too, so she told herself, would begin, now that he was old enough, to mould him into her own ideal, to turn his thoughts from the unusual to the commonplace, to give him that vision which sees only what the world sees, to focus his ambitions on the standard set by his father.

School life, however, only emphasized Stanford West's inclinations. Ill at ease from the first, his feeling of discontent did not leave him. He learned quickly and facilely. His habits were measured and meticulous. He listened attentively to all that was told him, and rarely

spoke. Called upon directly for a recitation, he responded tentatively, but always gave a good account of himself. When he sat down, it was with the relief and satisfaction which follow a disagreeable ordeal well performed. In his contact with the other children, he was decorous and modest. But his very reserve made him an outcast. Not that he cared. Isolation never troubled him; and the dignified seriousness of his bearing went far in warding off the malicious chaffing which, otherwise, so unfamiliar a figure as he would have called forth. He was never approached with overtures of friendship; nor did he himself seek participation in the games the others played. His father made inquiries, and was filled with admiration. His mother made inquiries, and was broken-hearted. Even when she was told that she had "a highly gifted and remarkable child," it seemed only to intensify the fact that her son was strange and unusual.

During these early school years, the bond between the boy and his father grew closer and closer. But his mother's fears deepened and became more tangible as the boy's personality strengthened. She felt that every day weakened her hold upon him and lessened her chances of directing his nature into conventional channels. This feeling was emphasized by the fact that her husband rarely attempted to exert an influence over the boy. "If he is to be great"—thus would he answer the protestations of the unhappy woman—"his mind must not be hampered. He must be permitted to find his own groove in the world and to mould his own destiny." But she would answer that she wanted her son to be great as his father was great, not to follow wild paths of which she had no knowledge and whose destination she could not foresee. "He will follow in my path," Joseph West would answer. "He will grow up with me and carry on the work which I have begun." The father also had secret hopes for the boy—hopes coloured and limited by his own life and ambitions. He recognized himself

mirrored in the child. He sensed in the small, silent companion of his walks the consummation of those cultural ideals for which he was now giving his life.

When Stanford West was old enough his father told him of his noble ancestors. The boy asked for many details; he was proud of so fine a romance. He never tired of listening to the story, especially the part relating to the bravery and calm with which the nobles faced the guillotine. Herein lay his admiration. He regretted the misgovernment which brought on the retribution of the Revolution, but consoled himself for the Bourbon ineptitude by the fact that those who had put the royal family to death could produce only a rule of violence, terrorism and anarchy. He was sorry Louis XVIII had returned to the throne and been deposed, for the exploits of "the little corporal" fired his imagination. Had not Napoleon, too, been of noble birth? The story of his great grandfather also had to be told him many times; his youthful soul was quick to discover the moving romance of those early, troubled times. Proud of his blood, he felt a strong impulse to uphold his stirring tradition. He was careful of his actions, lest they should exhibit snobbishness; and was always scrupulously chivalrous, as became one with his prestige.

Stanford West soon came to look upon his father with pride. Here was a man worthy of emulation. The courtesy and respect shown Joseph West by all those who knew him heightened the boy's already powerful desire to follow in his footsteps, to become a great teacher of men, a disseminator of fine thoughts and high ideals. His father's vocation was the highest of which he could conceive; and his father's learning, which he felt was very great, filled him with admiration. Some day he, too, would be learned. The desire and the belief were one. He applied himself sedulously to his school tasks. He read for hours in the books his father gave him. He soon found that his studies and his reading were pleas-

ing and diverting. The discovery delighted him. Thus far there was nothing irksome in the path which led to the dizzy heights of success to which his father had attained. He felt not only that, in following his father's example, he was doing what was right and best, but that he had found a task congenial to himself.

During this period his mother watched him with a feeling akin to ease of mind. Perhaps her fears had been groundless. After all, the strange, silent boy, whom bereft women instinctively wanted to gather into their arms, might find his destiny in following the ways of his father. These were the days in which her child was very near to her. She hovered over him expectantly, encouraging him in his youthful attempts at gathering knowledge. And Stanford West relied upon his mother more than he had before. He came to her with his problems, and she was happy.

Two years sped away while the boy forged on toward his childish ambition. He was now twelve, physically robust and mentally alert. At school he accomplished nearly two years' work in one, preferring study to play. When the holidays came, bringing with them the stagnation of deep summer and the cessation from work, he would wander along the river and among the hills, discontented and without the instinct for recreation.

Standing on the crest of Crow's Nest, looking down upon the city's grey and red roofs half-hidden by the maple trees now motionless in the summer heat, he began to project his mind beyond the boundaries of the valley. He could plainly see the red brick college which enfolded his father's life and aspirations, forsaken and isolated on its stretch of green lawn. There had been a time when, looking upon this building, he had imagined himself seated at the desk in the little office which formed a sharp projection to the north. The vision had intoxicated his mind and set his heart beating faster. But how small the school seemed that summer day, viewed from the

hill's summit! And how small was this city in which he had been born!

He looked down the river, across the interminable meadows. Suddenly the genius of a world far beyond the swaying wheat came and stood beside him, thrilling him with tales of distant lands and with promises of future glory. He tried to locate his own house behind the trees along the river. When his eye found the small window-lined cupola in which he had spent so many hours with his books, he experienced a sensation of pathos whose meaning he could not understand. His home seemed far away and very small; and he felt the alien genius again directing his eyes down the valley. He was sure that somewhere beyond the horizon there were colleges far larger than the one below him in Greenwood. And he was sure that there were other men, different men, who, like his father, sat in their offices and directed the destinies of those about them. That he had permitted this last thought troubled his conscience, for he revered that gentle, courteous man who had first led him as a little child to the great rock on which he now stood. For days afterward Stanford West was overcome with a restiveness whose source he could not trace and whose import he did not guess.

With his mother he went to concerts, and for the first time he felt the splendid spell of music. It heightened his unrest and made him sad. It recalled the day he had first discovered the littleness of his city and associated itself with the genius from beyond the valley who had come and stood beside him. Sometimes he sat at the piano for an hour at a time, searching for chords and working out sequences. Unresolved chords pleased him the most, and he would linger over them, striking them again and again. Often he asked his mother to play for him. She, a good musician, would purposely begin some inconsequential melody. But the boy would stop her and ask for things which made the good woman wonder

at his unusual tastes. Was it normal for a boy of twelve to prefer Schumann and Mozart to the gayer and more piquant composers? She would ask him the reason for his preferences, but his answers only troubled her the more. Sometimes he would demand florid and militant music, and when he told her it was unlike Greenwood and its people, she was too puzzled to reply, and would go straightway to her husband and tell him of these strange criticisms.

It was during his summer vacation that Stanford West began his reading of the poets. These books of verse made a deeper appeal to him than had any of the others. He would sit alone through the late hours of the afternoon, enthralled by the new discovery of rhyme and rhythm. He stated his preferences to his father, who encouraged him in this new enthusiasm, seeking out other treasures for him among the great shelves in the study. Thereafter when the boy went into the hills on his solitary walks, he always carried with him a slender volume. His new passion was greater than any he had hitherto experienced.

Before summer was over, the instinct of creation had seized him. At first he had not understood the delicious fever which assailed him whenever he read a particularly resonant passage of poetry. Then suddenly one night, as he sat alone in his father's study, there came to him the definite desire to write something which would be his own. A trace of late summer twilight lingered along the crest of the hills beyond the river. Here and there through the trees glowed the orange lights of early lamps. A faint lapping of water arose along the banks of the river. All about was the solitude of summer. The night, for some unaccountable reason, saddened him. The impressions of his long summer—a summer which had brought him the aroma of distant places and the revelation of poetry and music—drifted clearly across his mind. He had thought them transient, and wondered

that they should return. This discovery of himself focused his mind on what seemed a necessity to set down his mood and preserve it. He began to write the reminiscences of those psychological experiences which once again had become so real and clear-cut. As he wrote he understood his restlessness. He realized that his impulse toward beauty—the gratification of which had always left him disconsolate—had been one with the instinct for visual thought.

After that night the instinct became more tyrannical. He wrote continually in a little note-book which he kept hidden in his room; and in his secret practice he found the consolation he had needed, but which till now he had not known existed. Having found an outlet for the thoughts and impressions which followed him throughout the day, he did not look upon them with the same feeling of unhappy resignation. The emotions he felt when his mother played to him, the moods that came over him as he walked among the hills, the splendid intoxication which fired him when he read the poetry his father gave him—all these things he set down and described. He had a feeling for fine phrases and sonorous words, and sometimes tried his hand at short lyrics. These imitative and doleful strophes filled his childish soul with the greatest pleasure.

He began to watch himself. He spied on his thoughts. He took an interest in people and found a new delight in the activities of those about him. The differences in people's opinions, as well as in their physical characteristics, became manifest to him. Whenever he heard music he would analyse its mood and recount in his note-book its effect upon him. He wrote a long account of his grandmother's death and his impressions during her illness. The subject of his own future began to take on a serious aspect. One day it occurred to him that, if he followed the example of his father and spent his days as a great teacher, he would have no opportunity to write.

For a time the thought depressed him, but his mind soon turned from it to his immediate surroundings. He became intoxicated with all manifestations of life; and for the first time was happy. Even the memories which had hitherto depressed him, became vivid and interesting. Now he could set down his past experiences. They thus became material for his new joy of self-expression.

III

THREE years came and went, years overflowing with an abundance of joy. His active soul was quick to recognize and absorb the beauties round him. His mother, conscious of the sudden change in him, rejoiced. His father saw in his avidity for study the coming fulfilment of his own ambitions for the boy. Stanford West was nearly sixteen, hale, clear-eyed and conspicuously able. He followed the courses of instruction laid out by his father, and was eager for learning. He made companions among his school-fellows, throwing himself with zest into the healthy outdoor escapades of the other students. He became the intellectual leader of the members of his class, and commanded their respect. They came to him for advice and ideas, and went home to their parents with stirring tales of his accomplishments.

His writing now was not entirely secret. The things he cared for most he showed his father, who encouraged and helped him. His life was full—full of the fine fervour of youth and fired with the divine delight of self-expression. He read voluminously from the poets and philosophers and the masters of living prose. Spirited and splendid emotions surged up in him. He dreamed of the fine deeds and the stout hearts of the Middle Ages. He envied the master accomplishments of the Renaissance. He longed for the dangers of the Napoleonic epoch. He projected himself into the vigorous romances of ancient Greece. Of all these intoxications he wrote in prose and verse. His tastes broadened. New problems presented themselves, and he pondered over them. He began to think more and more of his future and to analyse the advantages of the life he had planned.

A change came over his viewpoint. Unknowingly, he had lost many illusions regarding his father and mother. The rôle he had chosen failed to gratify his ardent ambitions. It was puny compared with the vast outlook which, in the silence of grey twilight, loomed up beyond the encircling hills. Were there not greater men than his father? Even Joseph West took orders from mysterious directors in another and larger city. What of the writers of those sombre, maroon books which formed the guide-posts of his father's teachings? And what of those men who, throughout the ages, had given birth to new thoughts, conceived new systems and dreamed new ideals? He had read their books. Even his father spoke of them reverently. *They* were the epoch-makers, the true leaders of mankind. *They* were the great motivating forces of humanity. Why should he not emulate *them?* Their footsteps led into the clouds. Here were regions worthy of attainment.

Stanford West, standing upon the threshold of adolescence, doubted not his ultimate possibilities. Once more the question of his writing troubled him. Should he follow the lines cast for his father, it would be the end to those exquisite hours of personal labour. Could he bring himself to forswear this instinct which dominated every conscious moment of his life? He faced the future with apprehension. Despondency seized him. He went a week without writing to test his power of abstinence. His suffering during that time was acute; a thousand thoughts had struggled for expression. He returned to his note-book stricken with grief and confused in mind.

The autumn season intensified his depression. November had denuded the trees and laid waste the hills. A cold wind rattled the dead leaves against the house. His mind, quick to adjust itself to an environment, registered the melancholy impressions of the barren world. He grew weary of his former projects. His school life became tiresome. The routine chafed. Now his studies

seemed to lead him nowhere. Their significance had vanished. His lessons, once so neatly organized with his future plans and so well co-ordinated with his dominating ambitions, suddenly turned to chaos. He longed to escape from them. His school-books became chains which imprisoned him in a world too narrow to satisfy him. He wanted to escape, to pay no heed save to his own thoughts, to follow out the dreams with which his mind overflowed, to spend his whole time in the only affair which gratified him—his writing.

He told some—not all—of his misgivings and longings to his father and mother. His mother wept and attempted to argue him out of his despondency. Unappeased, he turned from her with only the added pang of pity. His father did not argue. Wisdom mastered Joseph West's disappointment. He asked his son to name what he desired, and promised to aid him in his new ambitions. The boy was abashed. He neither knew his desires nor understood his ambitions. Like one who had suffered a defeat he returned to his work.

But the question had its effect. What indeed did he desire? What was this new ambition? He worked doggedly and persistently, but never escaped the perplexity of this new problem. He began to analyse his natural impulses, to weigh his possibilities. He projected himself into numerous vocations. But whatever the line of endeavour he momentarily considered, it was cast in the midst of a great city animated with life and ablaze with colour. Never could he imagine himself bound to Greenwood. He had begun to dislike the city of his birth. Its streets and people had become too familiar, its boundaries too restricted. He had a feeling, deep-seated and ineradicable, that he would soon outgrow its limitations. He hungered for great distances, for glaring changes. The monotonous vision of his present environment left him with a sense of suffocation. When twilight settled over the valley, he became keenly aware that far away beyond

the grey sky-line there was another life, splendid and resonant—a life of great triumphs and tragic defeats, of mighty conquests and magnificent rewards. This was the world of which he wished to be a part. But how was he to exert his power? How disperse his vitality? The passion of leadership, the dream of greatness, were his. That he might become a writer of moving books did not at present occur to him. His instinct of self-expression was too intimate and personal a thing.

In his groping after a solution to his perplexity, he began to weigh his opinions, to question his beliefs. Things which heretofore he had accepted without reservation, he now surveyed from the standpoint of intrinsic value. The inevitable question of religion for the moment transcended all others. He began to balance the authority of his mother and father against that of the mighty free-thinkers whose utterances he occasionally encountered in his reading. He discovered, at first to his horror, that his faith in the religious teachings of his family were weakening. The queries which for centuries had assailed the minds of mankind presented themselves to him anew, with terrible and devastating force. He sought out the works of the great immoralists and plunged into them with the rashness of youth. Fortified by the doctrines of atheism, he argued with bitterness against his mother's beliefs. It was the bitterness born of doubt, not of conviction. He constantly wondered whither his arguments would lead. Thereafter the frightened woman watched his reading. Certain books were taken from his hands and forbidden him. At this he became resentful, and argued against the venerated dogmas of the past more bitterly than ever. But despite his doubts, he dared not make a final renunciation of his early teachings. His position was too insecure. Yet he felt vaguely that his mother's interference in his reading was a handicap to that mental development which sooner or later would solve the problem of his future.

IV

WINTER passed. Stanford West continued his precarious meditations. His school tasks were discharged competently but without distinction. His mind was preoccupied with the uncertainty of Christian formulas. He vacillated between pious acceptance and daring negation. He knew that, left to himself, he would soon have broken with the dicta of his early training. But when he considered the pain such a breach would cause his mother and father, his conscience interfered: he could not bring himself to declare openly against the beliefs so dear to them. Many times he had been on the point of renunciation, when the tears in his mother's eyes checked him. Again, his father's words, fraught with love and tenderness, melted his audacity. The old admiration for his father, coupled with his early memories, acted upon him more powerfully than argument.

But the tenets of his youth, strengthened by years of unquestioning acceptance, were slowly breaking down. His mind, influenced by reading and self-observation, had begun to operate independently. Young as he was, he began to consider virtue in the abstract, to conceive of Christian ethics divested of theological nomenclature and stripped of their accompanying beliefs. Then, at the moment when he would have repudiated the insignia of virtue and compromised by retaining the substance, the pressure from his parents, backed by the impact of love, drove him from his position. Reproaching himself, he would strive to regain the faith of his boyhood.

One day in early spring he was sitting on the steps of the veranda. He had been reading, but his mind had

become restless, and the book lay closed at his side. A light wind shook the trees over the swollen river. The young grass was just showing itself. Here and there were colour-spots of early spring flowers. Beyond the trees' branches, speckled with tiny buds, the yellow-green hills glistened in the sunlight. Masses of white cloud moved swiftly above the hill's summit. From everywhere came the rich fragrance of spring. Stanford West was rapidly approaching young manhood. In another week he would be seventeen. But the problems which for over a year had troubled him seemed no nearer a solution. The desire to follow in the footsteps of his father, however, had become more remote than ever during the past months; and the great question of religion had brought him to a seeming impasse. To answer this question as his instincts dictated would be to bring misery and heartache to those who loved him. Yet strive as he would, he could not justify to himself his early beliefs.

As he looked forth upon the new buds and the blinding shimmer of sunshine on the hills, an irresistible desire to write laid hold upon him. For a while he awaited the impression he wished to seize. It came quickly and clearly, and he was soon in the midst of a rhapsodic fantasy of early spring. In it was encompassed his new and half-formed paganism. It denied God and glorified the spirit of the out-of-doors. It called upon the children of men to forget their dogmas and to seek a more gracious life in the sanctuary of the fields and in the wooded temples of the hills. While he wrote his mother came to him. Seating herself at his side, she took the paper from his hand and read. The young poet watched the silent woman. Her face became grave. And did she whiten a little? He saw the tears come to her eyes, and was sorry he had pained her. At that moment she tore his composition in two and turned upon him with hopeless anger.

"It has come to this—after all!" She looked at the

boy searchingly as if he were a stranger to her. "To think that a child of mine——" Her voice choked, but she mastered herself and went on, speaking like one who had been deeply injured by a great wrong. "How little you must care for all your father and I have done for you, that you can turn upon us like this and ridicule the most sacred things in our lives."

"I didn't mean to hurt you or ridicule your beliefs," responded the boy. His mother did not answer, and he felt called upon to explain. "That was only what I felt for the moment, sitting here in the open—in the spring."

The woman, seeming not to hear him, said: "What have we done to deserve this? That a child I have always watched over and loved should turn out an unbeliever and a denier of God!"

She paused, stunned by the horror of the thought. "I'd rather never have brought you into the world than have had you lost to me like this." Then she broke down and cried.

Stanford West left the distracted woman and went quietly to his room. He loved his mother and pitied her in her distress. But he felt, too, the sting of personal injustice. No longer did he doubt the right of his cause; and the problem became more serious. He had suffered a direct and open repression of his actions. At once he became more concerned with parental interference. So long as it was confined to mere opinions, he could hide his real beliefs and thus spare his mother and father unhappiness. Now that his personal writings were to be censored, the situation took on a different aspect. He foresaw open conflict. Such a prospect would not have daunted him had he not been handicapped by a sense of duty and a feeling of tenderness toward his antagonists. These things constituted powerful weapons against him. He knew their efficacy. They had been used on him before, and they had conquered him.

He viewed the future with apprehension. Forecasting

its possible consequences, he was overwhelmed with grief. That his mother had been unfair to him, he was convinced. What right had she to destroy the lines he had written? They were his own thoughts, his own emotions. His resentment was neither keen nor vicious. He knew that sorrow had dictated her action—sorrow born of an overpowering love. But he suddenly sensed the futility of there ever being a complete reconciliation between him and the woman who bore him. He knew she would not change; her beliefs were an integral part of her nature; they constituted at once her comfort and her strength. He knew, too, that he could never succumb entirely to her decrees. He understood his temperament sufficiently to realize that when he wrote he could not brook interference. His writing was his one outlet: in its spontaneity lay its joy.

As he meditated on the gravity of the episode, his father entered the room and sat down facing him. Suddenly he knew that the first serious conflict of his life was at hand. He took the defensive sullenly and waited.

Joseph West began gently, "My son, I don't want to blame you or reproach you. But I want to understand you, and I want you to understand me."

Having expected a harsh remonstrance, the boy was startled at his father's gentleness. Not knowing what to say, he kept silent.

The man went on in the same quiet tone. He spoke first of the barren years following his marriage, and of the longings and the prayers which filled them. He told of his happiness when, his hopes fulfilled, a new life of his own flesh and blood had come to him. He recounted the early anxieties and fears which companioned the hours when the child had been unwell or unhappy. He revoiced the hopes and ambitions he had cherished as the boy grew older and stronger.

"It was my great desire," he said, "that when you became a man, you would be worthy of all the love and

devotion your mother and I had poured into your childhood—that you would be great and respected and bring honour to your name. When the bond between you and me grew stronger, I came to look upon my life only as a preparation for yours. I did the things which fell to my lot, in the faith that I was building a foundation for you. I wanted you to take up my work when I should have to lay it down, and to carry on the ideals I handed down to you. For years I've been looking forward to the day when my dreams would be yours. And all the time I watched over you closely; I guided you lovingly wherever you went; I tried to instil in you the nobility of high endeavour and the fear of God. You know it won't be long before that little college on the hill will be a mighty force. I've worked hard for it, for I thought that some day you might lead it. And yet I've never stood between you and the things you desired. Your destiny was your own. When the time came, if the work I planned for you wasn't what you wanted, you'd have found no opposition in me. I'd have been disappointed, but I'd have helped you, for your happiness was my one concern."

Joseph West stopped. But the boy remained silent: he was fighting against the emotions his father's words evoked, for he felt the time had come when he must combat the tyranny of devotion by which he was ruled. The gentle voice was speaking again:

"My son, there's no happiness along the path you are going. There's no comfort for you, and there's no reward. Other men have tried it, but they have been the world's failures. A life without faith accomplishes nothing. You may look upon that remark as old-fashioned. Well, there was a time when I revolted against my father, but I soon came to see that his was the greater wisdom. You are young yet; you can't judge things from the world's standpoint. That's why you think your mother and I are behind the times; that's why you ridicule our

beliefs. But believe me, my son, there will come a time when you will look back upon this revolt with deep regret, and then it will be too late to repair the injury you have done yourself. I'm older than you, and I'm wiser in these things; and I tell you there is no comfort in a life without belief in God. Don't think I want you to be a prude—that's farthest from my desires; but I want you to be strong and upright and happy, and I want you to do great things in the world. Religion is the foundation of all life. It has been the hope and guide of men for centuries. Once you renounce its security you will find no new security to take its place. Instead, you will encounter only a new set of problems; and those problems have never been solved."

He laid his hand upon the boy's knee. "It's only my love that makes me talk to you this way. It's because I see these things more clearly than you and know what is best for you. I want you to try to believe that the life I have planned for you is a noble one. There's a big work to be done, and it will take a big man. But there's nothing you can't do. Think over what I've said, and don't ruin your fine promise, as other men have ruined theirs, by following a belief which leads nowhere and has no guiding purpose."

"Can I help what I believe?" The boy was sullen. "Do you want me to pretend what I don't really feel? I've tried to look at things the way you and mother do. It isn't that I don't want to, but I can't. I wouldn't give you pain for anything in the world, and I wouldn't give mother pain. After I found out—a long time ago—how you took my beliefs, I kept them to myself. What I just wrote on the veranda was the impressions that came to me as I sat there. I had no intention of showing them to any one; but mother took them away from me and read them. Could *I* help it?"

The thought of what had happened to his fantasy turned his sullenness to anger. He paused a moment,

then broke out: "She had no right to destroy my writing. It was my own. For years I've written down the things I felt, and I've kept them all to myself. They've been the only things that have given me any happiness."

He arose suddenly and took out his note-book. Its pages were nearly all full of close, boyish handwriting. He shook it at his father angrily.

"Why shouldn't I write down what I think? It's been my only way of talking to somebody. When I went to you and mother you scolded me and told me I was breaking your hearts. You cried because I didn't agree with the things you believed. You were always telling me what *you* had planned for me, whether it was what I wanted to do or not. You always tried to influence me and make me think things I didn't want to."

The boy felt an urgent need to talk, to formulate into words the accusations and the thoughts which had been pent up in him for a year or more. A strong impulse swept him on. Impelled by his anger, he arose and stood close to his father.

"You want me to do the same things you've been doing all your life, and to believe the same things, too. But why should I follow your example? Suppose every son had followed his father's example,—where would the world be now? Because your life satisfies you, it doesn't follow that it satisfies me. And it doesn't. Do you think I want to spend my days in this place? Do you think I want to be cooped up in a schoolhouse all my life, and never have any freedom to do what I want to do? I couldn't stand such a life. It pleases you—all well and good. I want to do other things, bigger things. You said yourself there wasn't anything I couldn't do. Don't I know it? Haven't I felt it? And yet you would tie me down to this place. All last year I wanted to go somewhere else. I wanted to see new people and visit new places. The thought of spending my life here as you want me to is unbearable, and I don't intend to do it."

He was intoxicated with his own utterances. His mind became clearer, and he was animated by a courage he never dreamed he possessed. His anger turned into defiance. The things which heretofore he had scarcely permitted himself to think, came to his lips unbidden. He looked down at his father. The man's silence challenged him.

"And why should I follow you?" he burst forth. "Are you a great man? What have you done in the world that I should mould myself after you? Have you ever written any great books or done any great things? Have you any freedom? Can you do what you want? No! I want to be a great man. I want to have time to write—yes, that's what I want."

Without warning the problem which had so long perplexed him, became clarified. He hurried on:

"I want to be a writer. You once asked me what my ambition was; well, that's what it is. I want to have freedom to write. Now you know. I'll never do the things you want me to do. I won't spend my life here. I won't follow your footsteps. I won't believe the things you and mother want me to. I'll do my own work, and I'll think my own thoughts. And you've no right to stop me, either. Some day I'll be greater than you are. I'll do bigger things in the world. I don't care how much you tell me you love me, or how much you try to win me by pity. If you won't let me stay here and do my writing, I'll go away. That's how much I care for what you and mother think. I won't be hemmed in and molested by any of your narrow ideas. I don't care how much pain I give you, and I don't care how much you've counted on my future. My life's my own. I didn't ask you to bring me into the world, and I don't owe you anything——"

He broke off. Noticing the other's bowed head, he became frightened at his own words. A quick reaction came over him. He looked down at the stricken figure

of the man who for years had been his playmate, who had taken care of him and given him a great love. His father seemed to have grown old suddenly. How grey his hair was! Something gripped the boy's throat. He tried to master it, but could not. His whole past surged up in him. His eyes became hot, and he fell on one knee and kissed his father on the forehead.

Joseph West rose slowly, feebly like an old man, and put his hand on his son's shoulder.

"You are my son," he said, "and I shall neither reprove you nor desert you. Some day you'll think back on these words of yours, and your remorse will be your bitterest punishment."

But the punishment had already commenced. The boy dropped into a chair and, covering his face with his hands, wept.

V

SUMMER vacation came once more. Stanford West, defeated by his own vehemence in his first battle for freedom, had striven to recompense the suffering he had brought upon his father. His mother, too, deeply wounded by the incident, he had sought to appease by gentleness and solicitude. So careful had he been to counteract the blow dealt those who loved him, that both his mother and father had now, after three months, begun to look upon the incident as the result of temporary irritation. But though the boy was outwardly courteous and resigned, his spirit of rebellion was far from subdued. His inner attitude had changed but little. As the weeks went by, his bitter words to his father burned themselves deeper and deeper into his mind. He feared intuitively that in the passion of his new beliefs he might be guilty of another outburst. This he would have regretted as he regretted the last one. Therefore he held himself under a strict discipline of silence, and applied himself industriously to his school-work. He strove conscientiously to assimilate his father's point of view, although he had a presentiment that these efforts would be futile.

He continued to write. As he developed fluency of diction, his pleasure in self-expression increased. There constantly came back to his mind his decision to be a writer. The idea had now begun to take hold of him; he could not eliminate it from his calculations. Often he caught himself dreaming of his future as a writer. Though he strove to put the idea aside, it persisted tenaciously to absorb his thoughts. He regretted that this

desire should persistently assail him, for he had decided half-heartedly to accept the future his father had prescribed. The consequences of any other course were too appalling to consider. He had caught more than one glimpse of the effect which a counter-decision would have on his father. The vision had haunted him for days, leaving him humble and resigned. Then, there was his mother to consider. She, even more than her husband, would suffer if her hopes were destroyed.

Stanford West felt the responsibility of an only child. The sorrow which shone in his mother's eyes when she pleaded with him, left him helpless to exert his own individuality. Once he had attempted to refute her arguments; but her grief had become so intense and the hopelessness of her outlook so poignant, that he was overwhelmed by the silent horror his words produced. He had several talks with his father, but they merely emphasized the terrible strength of the prison love had built round his life. His attitude therefore had become one of resignation. He grew dispirited when he thought of his future. His one spontaneous pleasure was his writing which now he was careful to conceal. Self-pity seized him. There was no one in whom to confide, and the anguish of loneliness overcame him. He had no enthusiasm for his work: it only emphasized his isolation.

He was grateful when the summer holidays arrived. They brought with them a prolonged leisure and an opportunity for relaxation from a galling routine. He wrote much—rhyme and blank verse, short sketches and longer polemics, stories and rhapsodies. The imaginative supplanted the merely personal. He wrote with zest and without fatigue, for this new work gave him fresh delight. But he was never at ease in his mind. The pressing question of what would be his profession tormented him constantly—all the more now that he had but one more year's schooling at home before he would enter a university. His father had told him he might go wher-

ever he chose. But a decision was impossible as long as the problem of his future remained unsettled. So, as the time drew near when he would have to take a final and irrevocable stand, he became restless and uncertain.

It was at this time that an unexpected influence entered his life, one which was to put a new face on his outlook. Stanford West experienced the awakening of sex. For over a year he had associated but little with the student body, avoiding instinctively those social activities inevitably found in co-educational institutions. Consequently he had escaped those early flirtations and pseudo-love affairs which result from the informal side of school life. He preferred his books and his writing to the company of his fellows, and, in persuance of his preference, had acquired the reputation of a recluse. The girls in his class had been attracted more than once by his fine quiet features; his reticence they attributed to bashfulness. But his continual aloofness had brought him into unpopularity. When school dances or excursions were planned his name was always omitted. He lacked that gaiety in inconsequential affairs which made for good-fellowship.

Alice Carlisle, sensitive by temperament and frail of physique, was different both in details and essentials from the young girls he had been accustomed to see daily in the public school. Quiet and reticent like himself, she had, since her earliest childhood, possessed a diffidence which rendered her uneasy in the company of other children. At the death of her mother, her father, a municipal judge, had sent her to a private school at the state capital. Here the sombreness of her nature, already augmented by her mother's death, was further emphasized by strict and narrow discipline. She had been unable to adapt herself to the democracy of boarding-school life.

Stanford West saw her for the first time during the summer holidays. He was at church with his mother and father, and the girl, then barely sixteen, sat with the

Judge a little in front of him. He could see her full profile against the clouded glass window. Her simple white dress of batiste clung limply about her shoulders, revealing the contour of her young breast. A soft lace collar fell back from her neck. The broad ends of the large bow of white satin which surmounted her drooping leghorn hat, hung down her back. A soft reflected light fell upon her face and neck and filtered through her light hair, making the outline glisten like silver.

The boy watched her a long time. Her quiet beauty held him, like the beauty in nature. But there was here an added fascination. He caught himself sympathizing with her. He had heard the Judge tell his father of the girl's sorrow at her mother's death and of his sending her away that she might have new associations. As he watched her he could not believe she had forgotten her grief; her serenity was too grave, her gaze too wistful, her mouth too tender. His own vicissitudes of mind suddenly became less important. The thought of his future submerged itself in a new and puzzling emotion.

For days the memory of her persisted. The boy found pleasure in visualizing her slender features and in recalling how the warm light had shimmered in her hair and across her bare neck. He wondered when she would leave Greenwood to return to school. Would he see her again before she went? He did not attempt to analyse this new and strange interest which, for the moment, had crowded out the more serious questionings in his mind.

His emotions were delicious, and he indulged them without thought of their consequences. He wrote many poems to the girl, but threw them all away. They seemed inadequate in their expression of the subtle delight which called them forth. In the early mornings, when the red sun poured over the white edges of the hills, he liked to imagine the girl standing in the long grass by the river, watching with him the splendid phenomenon of dawn.

At twilight he found pleasure in picturing her at his side, silent and meditative. When he walked in the woods and sat down to read from the lyricists who were always with him these days, he felt a strong desire to have her there, that he might read aloud to her and thus share his joy of fine music and stirring words.

That he might realize these imaginings never occurred to him. He knew his father and Judge Carlisle had been friends for years, but the thought of meeting the girl did not present itself to him. His mind had long been accustomed to solitude, and his heart had long been fed on solitary joys. He, therefore, accepted his emotions as personal—the result of his own self-engendered dreams. He had hoped, however, that he might see her again, as he had seen her before, from afar and without recognition. His dreams of her were divorced from all reality.

But he was destined to meet Alice Carlisle and to love her. One day in early August he and his father, long since reconciled and held together by an even closer bond than before, were crossing the bridge which led to the foot-hills beyond the city. As he paused, looking down the river, he heard the voice of Judge Carlisle greet his father. Turning he saw before him the girl. The fact that she was real and near to him startled him for a moment. He did not know what he said when the Judge presented him. He was conscious only of his exaltation at the warm touch of her hand.

The two men walked on together toward the foot-hill path, and the boy and girl, silent and embarrassed, lingered behind. The ecstatic mood of Stanford West lasted but a few moments. He soon found himself not only able to talk but eager to tell the girl of his emotions since he had first seen her. As he followed the two men up the woodland path through those ways he knew so well, his silent companion did not seem unfamiliar to him. Too often had he thought of her, as now, walking with

him through the pillarettes of sunshine formed by the leaves and branches overhead.

"I've thought of you many times," he heard himself saying, "since that Sunday I first saw you. I've often imagined you walking with me . . . just as you are now . . . along this very path. In the evenings I've stood with you looking down at the city from that rock." He pointed to the hill's summit toward which his father and the Judge, now far ahead, were moving. "And in the early mornings," he went on, "I've stood down in the valley . . . in the fields by the river, and . . . we've watched the sun along the hills. . . . Foolish, wasn't it? . . . Yet, I never took a walk or read a book that I didn't try to think that you were with me . . . listening to me." He looked up as if he doubted the girl's reality. "You see, I never thought I'd meet you. . . . Did I look startled when I first spoke to you? . . . You know, I never thought of you as . . . as real."

Again he looked at the girl, his heart beating fast. He was not master of his speech; his words had come involuntarily. And again he heard his own voice saying: "I've written a great many things for you. You see, when I thought of you it . . . well, it made me want to write." Embarrassed, he laughed. "Maybe . . . some day . . . I'll show you a poem of mine. Then maybe you'll know . . . how I felt about you."

Alice Carlisle did not answer. She glanced up into the boy's face inquisitively. His words frightened her. Yet she would not have had them otherwise, for they sent a pleasant warmth through her. Stanford West was unlike the other boys she knew. She neither misunderstood nor resented what he said. Her first instinct had been to rebuke his frankness, to tell him she did not believe him. But this impulse to reprimand was overcome when she looked in his eyes. They were innocent of all forgery of sentiment; and her resentment turned

to pleasurable fear. She found herself secretly hoping he would tell her more.

They had come to an opening in the trees. Below them the whole valley lay revealed. Thin summer mist shrouded the more distant hills beyond. The lazy river was like a great strip of green glass in the still air. The tall, thick trees leaning over it were as still as the painted trees of a picture. The fields below the town formed an immense checquerboard of white and yellow and pale green squares. Here and there among them men and horses, like black pawns, moved back and forth as if guided by an invisible hand. The trees on the foot-hills opposite were deep blue-green. So dense did they appear that it seemed as if one might walk upon their rounded tops. Above them the cloudless sky was almost white with the early afternoon sunlight. The city in the valley seemed asleep. Even the trees which nearly hid the houses from the two silent watchers on the hill, were motionless. There was a faint, far noise of trafficking, but this was almost drowned by the muffled drone and din which arose from the insect life of the hills. Occasionally a bird, braver than the heat and stronger than the lassitude of summer, sent forth a shrill call above the monotonous hum; but it only intensified the afternoon's quietude. The boy spoke again in a voice whose unnaturalness startled him. He had never before put into words the things he felt when looking down into the green valley. It seemed strange to him that he should do so now.

"Whenever I stand here," he said, "and watch the river and the hills, I have a longing for something . . . something—I don't know what. I imagine myself flying away . . . out there"—he pointed toward the horizon—"into other countries and having all kinds of adventures in strange cities, with people I don't know." He paused contemplatively. "I get so restless walking here in the hills. . . . There's something awfully sad in nature. . . .

Don't you think so?" He did not wait for an answer. "I often wish a Jinn . . . or something . . . would come and carry me away on his back. You know, maybe the City of Brass is just over there . . . behind those hills. . . . Of course it isn't, but when the sun sets I pretend I can see the turrets of its palaces shining through the trees . . . there on the hilltops." He laughed again to hide his embarrassment. "Don't the hills make you sad, too . . . you know what I mean . . . make you imagine all kind of . . . of funny things?"

"Sometimes," the girl answered hesitatingly. "But," she added, after a silence, "I love the hills. I missed them terribly . . . away at school. We were kept in the city all the time . . . I hate the city. When I used to think of the hills and the river here it . . . it made me—cry. I suppose I wanted to come back. But I'm glad somebody else feels the same way. You know, mother used to tell me I was funny—because I liked to be alone. But it isn't funny, is it? . . . It's much nicer than sitting around with a lot of people you don't like."

They were nearing the summit. The boy took her arm to help her over the trunk of a tree which had fallen across the path. He was startled by the thrill which the contact of her body sent through him. How lonely he must have been in his previous walks! He wondered that he had not felt the solitude more. Could his unknown longing have been a desire for this slender girl? He did not try to answer the question. He only knew that to-day was different.

His thoughts again took voice. "It doesn't seem the same at all now that you are here with me. I'm not a bit lonely. . . . I don't feel that longing for something. When I know you're seeing the same things I am . . . smelling the same flowers . . . watching the same trees and the same clouds, I feel different about things. When I'm alone, no matter how wonderful a day it is, there's something—well, unsatisfactory about it. I wonder if

you know what I mean? I love to come here and watch all the different moods of nature; and yet . . . I always want to tell some one about them . . . call attention to them. No matter how much you like a thing, it doesn't give you much pleasure unless you can share it. . . . I suppose that's why I liked to imagine you were always with me, after I saw you in church. The thought that you were sharing all my emotions made me feel . . . more comfortable. It's the same way with my thoughts and the things I write. I always want to tell someone what's in my mind. Why, I never finish writing anything that I don't feel like showing it to some one. My mother and father don't seem to understand the things I think, or like what I write. I think the reason I liked you so much when I saw you was because I felt I could tell you things without having you misunderstand them."

He was trying to account for the unusual fascination of the girl. When he thought aloud he found that his thoughts came more clearly.

"You know," he went on, "I've seen lots of girls at school, but I never felt toward them the way I feel toward you. I never used to give them a second thought; and yet I've thought about you all the time—and never knew why. . . . Now I never want to come up here in the hills again unless you come with me. Tell me; does it make any difference to you to have me here?"

"I don't know." The girl's tone was guarded and evasive.

Stanford West glanced at her in silence; then looked down. Her answer abashed him. His cheeks burned suddenly.

"Of course it wasn't right for me to think—you felt the same." He spoke like one apologizing for an inadvertent misdemeanour. "It was foolish. . . . I—I'm sorry."

His words hurt her with a new kind of pang. She was unhappy, not knowing why. She realized her words

had pained him and she wanted to comfort him. But how was she to go about it? She felt herself more a woman at that moment than ever before. Something prompted her to say: "I didn't mean what I said. It does seem different to have some one with me. I think . . . I almost feel the way you do."

She was frightened at herself, at her own emotions. Had she said too much? What would be the consequences of her words? She wished her father were not so far ahead. She was treading new ground, and the way was strange to her.

"Will you come with me to-morrow?" she heard the boy asking. "I'll bring a book and read to you." And she heard herself say, "I'm afraid I can't." But when the boy persisted, asking her why she could not come, she had no answer to give. Finally she promised to meet him on the bridge the following afternoon. But that night, as she lay awake wondering at the events of the day, she decided it would be best for her not to go. Then the faint light in the room became blurred. She knew there were tears in her eyes. Was it her decision which had brought them?

The next day, however, she kept her appointment. And many times thereafter during the ensuing weeks she came to the bridge where Stanford West was waiting. Sometimes they walked through the wooded hills. Other days they took the river path by the wheat fields. Nearly always the boy, having brought with him a book, read to her from the poets. Not infrequently he read her verses he himself had written. These, she always told him, she liked the best.

Stanford West, for the first time in his life, was wholly happy. The uncertainty of his future never occupied his thoughts. His interest in the girl absorbed him entirely. Mornings and evenings he was busy writing. That he now had a sympathetic listener sent him to his task with new interest. The pleasure of reading his compositions

to the girl was nearly as great as his pleasure in writing them. The hours of simple and youthful joy he spent with her changed his melancholy nature to one bordering on exuberance. He found himself looking with comparative contentment on the plans his father had for his future. Greenwood itself had changed. He began to love its quiet. He lived in the ecstasy of the present, forgetting even that when the autumn came the girl would go away, and that he would have to submit again to the brusque routine of study. The brief raptures of his afternoons were too keen for thoughts of future distress.

VI

THE summer went quickly. Stanford West was in love with all the ardour of a strong and active soul. It was the love of adolescence, which questions not nor looks ahead, which finds contentment in the moment, and is without the foretaste of sorrow. His passion for Alice Carlisle was spontaneous and unanalytical. He did not admit to himself that he was in love. He knew only that with her he was contented and happy, and that when the summer rains kept them from their walks he was depressed and disconsolate. His only pleasure was in being with her, in watching the graceful movements of her hands, in hearing her talk, in seeing her lithe body climbing the steep paths of the hills. He was unaware of the sex appeal in all her supple movements. His desire for her was translated into tenderness. When he touched her he was unaware that his emotion was the result of physical longing.

Dispelled were his qualms regarding a profession. He wondered that he could have considered seriously so unimportant a question. The problem would no doubt solve itself and he was content to await eventualities. His future, heretofore so imminent, had receded far into the distance of the impending years. He no longer viewed life with apprehension: there was no need for immediacy in making a decision. As for his personal beliefs, he was willing to capitulate in favour of his parents. After all, beliefs were of minor importance. Now, more than ever, he regretted his past conduct. He had deeply pained his father and mother by insisting on a point of no value. His attitude had been petty. Never again would he

wound them with trivialities. His former ambition to attain to greatness appeared extravagant. He was not a little ashamed of it, and refrained from mentioning it again. How young he must have been to voice so fantastic a belief in himself! How little he had understood himself and his desires! How ungratefully he had acted toward those who loved him!

A mellow contentment has supplanted his unrest. His belligerent vitality of mind had subsided to genial acquiescence. His questioning curiosity toward life and its mysteries—a curiosity which had made him avid for knowledge, driving him into himself for days—had been replaced by an uneager attitude. He now accepted natural and social manifestations as spectacular panoramas without meaning or significance. His fine ardour for the world of science and research had dwindled into unconcern. His high aspirations, which had at once exalted and depressed him, had faded before his more tangible and intimate adoration for Alice Carlisle. In the presence of the influence she exercised over him, he had not strength to adhere to his former aggressive rôle. He did not care to dominate his surroundings. His independence and vindictiveness had been vanquished by softer impulses. He surveyed the world through the coloured glasses of romanticism. He read the love songs of minor poets, and wrote dolorous verses of youthful passion.

September came and with it the first realization of separation. He and the girl had spent the day on an island below the city's outskirts. They had boated down the river in the early morning while the mist still covered the hilltops. In the long wild grass by the water they had set table and lunched. All day the sun had been covered with haze, and the diffused grey light, like an artificial dusk, had affected their spirits. They had read half-heartedly to each other at first, but during the afternoon the silences between them were long. A chill evening wind moved

the grass about them and shook the trees overhead. Twilight came an hour early, bringing with it the first breath of approaching autumn. On a steep bank above the grey-green water the boy and girl sat close together, as if for shelter against the cool approach of night. Below them the boat waited, but each was loath to suggest it was time to return. Shadows were settling in the trees behind them, and the hills beyond were turning a deep blue-violet.

"To think that in another week I won't be here." The girl's voice was little more than a whisper. "I've loved this summer."

Then for the first time Stanford West became conscious of the transitoriness of his joy. The realization of its evanescence struck him with tragic force. He had thrown himself into this new experience with all the passion of a rash and impetuous nature. He had lived each day without thought of the morrow, content with what it had to give. Faced by the dissolution of his romance, he saw the future loom black and chaotic. He pictured the coming winter with its long routine of laborious study. The thought stunned him.

The girl misunderstood his silence. She had vaguely expected him to answer by an expression of personal grief at their nearing separation. His quiet piqued her.

"Of course it won't matter to you," she said in a strained voice. "You will stay here with the people you know. . . . That makes all the difference."

The boy shook himself free from his vision of the coming years.

"It will matter to me." As he spoke he found it difficult to restrain his excitement. "And I think you know just how much it will matter, too. . . . What difference will the people I know make? And what comfort will my home be after you have gone away? I've never been so happy in all my life as I've been with you. I've always been lonely for some one, and when you're gone

I'll be lonelier than ever. . . . I can't bear to think of the winter. . . . I hate the people here and I hate the place. If it hadn't been for you, I think I should have run away. Ever since I saw you I've dreamed of nothing else but you. I've only lived for the afternoons when we've been together. I haven't wanted anything else in the world except to be with you, and I don't know what I'm going to do when I can't see you. When you said you'd be gone in another week, it was like . . . well, like having some one take me by the throat and strangle me . . . I've been so happy with you . . . I never thought the time would come when we couldn't be together. I had a notion the summer would go on forever. Just now—when I thought of the future without you—everything got black before my eyes. I used to worry about my future and rebel against my father's plans for me; but after I had you I didn't care what I'd become. I didn't think of anything else but you. Nothing seemed to matter except being with you. Whenever I wrote anything, I always thought of you and of what you would say when I read it to you. . . . And then you say it won't matter to me when you go. . . . It *will* matter—more than anything else in my life."

The girl drew herself up to her knees and took her hand from his. "You . . . mustn't say those things." Frightened, she tried to speak coolly, but her voice trembled. "It isn't right to talk that way. I know you'll care when I'm gone—that's natural. We've been such good friends. I've loved having you talk to me and read to me . . . and I appreciate your showing me the things you wrote. But you shouldn't have said the things you did. You know you didn't mean them. When school opens again you'll be busy, and you'll forget all about me . . . just as I'll forget about you. So don't say any more foolish things and—and make me sorry I ever saw you."

The boy turned. His old self-assertiveness came back.

He had been thwarted, and he felt defiant, as in the first bitter interview with his father. "You may forget me," he said almost harshly, "but I'll never forget you. I've never cared for any one before. No one has ever meant anything to me; I've been alone all my life. I was happy after I met you—you changed everything. I don't want your thanks for having read and talked to you. I did it because I wanted to—more than anything else." He rose to his feet. "Yes . . . I'll tell you why I did it. I did it . . . because I loved you. . . . I'm not such a child as you think. I love you, and I want you always to remember it. I love you! . . . You won't forget me after I tell you that. I've loved you from the first time I saw you . . . although I don't believe I knew it till this minute. I suppose . . . I've only amused you. But it will be the last time." He shook his finger at her angrily.

Suddenly, as in his talk with his father, his anger reacted. Tenderness overcame him. He put his hands to his face and turned away, that the girl might not see the tears of which he was ashamed.

While he had been talking, the girl had arisen and retreated from him, terrified. But she had not resented his words. To the contrary, they had thrilled her. And when she saw him turn away, she was no longer frightened. All sense of danger vanished. She came toward him, calling him very low by name. Then she said, "I'm sorry I said what I did. . . . I—didn't mean it. I knew all the time . . . you loved me."

Turning, he looked at her. Her head was bowed. Wondering, he approached tentatively, as a child approaches a toy of new and terrible aspect, desiring yet fearful. His hand reached out and touched her arm, and moved slowly to her shoulder. He drew her to him, panic-stricken at his own audacity. Had she resisted he would have ceased and tried to apologize. But she did not resist, and in a second her body was held tight

against his. She raised her head, her hair brushing his cheek. Their lips met, trembling upon each other's.

Muted by the memory of their first kiss, they rowed slowly back to the city where the early street lights were already glowing dully in the blue twilight.

If hitherto there had existed the slightest antagonism between Stanford West's ideas and those of his father, it would now have given way to a complete concurrence. Life was full. Since he knew his love for Alice Carlisle was returned, he had no ambitions for a literary career in strange cities. The adventuresomeness of his nature, which had made him long for perilous conquests beyond the quiet confines of Greenwood, had departed from him. He became conservative. The risks of failure in a life which aimed too high took on a threatening aspect. He no longer regarded himself as alone. Single-handed he would gladly have faced the vicissitudes and failures imminent in the life of his former choice. In time he could have conquered them. But now it was different; there was some one else to consider. His failure or misfortune would not fall only upon himself; they would affect the girl as well. The instinct of protection, heretofore dormant, subtly but inexorably influenced his outlook. He admitted to himself, without argument, the advisability of his father's plans.

Thrice more he saw Alice Carlisle before she went away. Three days of rain added to the depression of the young lovers. The parting was painful. Their last day together was grey and cold. Standing close to each other on a summit of the hills they trembled, partly because of the chill wind. All the afternoon their depression had silenced them. On the morrow the girl would be gone. They were both children, and they both cried as they looked down on the sunless valley. When darkness began to gather they clung to each other hopelessly. Their present was so meagre; their future so vast. They both had premonitions of disaster.

"I shall always love you, Stanford." Her words were broken by sobs. "I shall never love any one but you. I shall think of you every minute we're apart. . . . I shall love you forever and forever."

The boy said: "No one else can ever come into my life . . . no matter what happens to you. I shall love you, too, forever and forever."

Their kisses were wet with their tears. They walked down the hill path in the semi-dark, their arms about each other. Both were suffering deeply. It was the first tragedy of their lives. Because they were so young they believed they had sounded the depths of grief.

That winter Stanford West entered upon his school tasks with an enthusiasm which astonished his masters. With the advice of his father he had planned a vast programme of study comprising those things he would most need to carry on the work of his prescribed future. He permitted himself little freedom. He did not allow his personal writings to interfere with his duties as a student. Sundays and holidays he read books his father selected. Over his actions, and even over his thoughts, he exercised a strict, self-imposed censorship. Sometimes his old desires arose in him and disturbed his equanimity. Freed from the immediate influence of Alice Carlisle, his poetic and adventurous soul would rebel occasionally against the pacific tenor of his plans; but shortly after he would resign himself and bow beneath the discipline. He dreamed of greater vistas of action than his future held, but went no further than a dream. The power that the girl exerted over him, though enfeebled by her absence, was potent enough to hold him to the path of his resolution. The memory of her words as she clung to him at parting made it easy for him to endure this new life of submission to external dictates.

Spring came once more and mellowed into summer. Stanford West passed his final examinations with honour. He had worked hard, allowing nothing to distract

him from the pursuit of his studies. Ere the holidays arrived he had mastered all those disquieting ambitions which tended to turn his mind into larger fields of endeavour. He wrote regularly to Alice Carlisle—long letters about his future plans and the progress he was making. Her letters to him steadied and assuaged him. She was glad he was doing well. She knew he would be an honour to his father. She felt he was capable of carrying on the work his father wanted him to do. She was happy over his prospects. Some day she would be proud of him.

The boy was encouraged by her solicitude. It went far in bringing about his contentment of mind. Once he had written, complaining of his prescribed future. He intimated that he was not entirely happy, and raised the possibility of his entering upon a broader sphere of action. But she straightway answered, reproving him for his dissatisfaction. She urged him to do all his father demanded, telling him that it was best and that her happiness depended upon his adhesion to his present course. The letter dissipated the boy's doubts, and he forged on with renewed spirit.

All winter Stanford West looked forward to the summer which would bring him again the girl's companionship. In the latter part of May, the holidays but a few weeks off, his mind was filled with dreams of her. The subtle joy of anticipation filled all his waking hours. It sent him about his tasks with a light heart. When his periods of expectancy were the keenest he found himself breathing fast and felt his face flush. His emotion was exquisite, and he wondered at it, for it was new and poignant beyond any other he had ever felt.

But the summer held little of joy in store for him. Judge Carlisle went to Europe for the holidays, taking his daughter with him. Stanford West saw her but twice before she departed, and even these two visits were spoiled by his melancholy. By the time she would

come back in the autumn, preparatory to returning to school, he himself would be gone. His sorrow was too bitter for him to accept it philosophically. He suffered for weeks, and nothing would console him. The fresh memory of her words and kisses made his anguish more stinging than if she had gone without seeing him.

Then one day, returning from the hills, he went direct to his room and sat down at his desk. Myriad impressions assailed him, and his old desire to write fired him like a powerful drug. For hours he wrote with an intensity only possible after long privation. This time he did not write personal impressions or disconnected fragments setting forth his moods and emotions. He felt a desire to accomplish something which he might give to the world, something creative and imaginative, something in which feeling and taste would preside over the mere manual execution. The instinct of the artist and creator mingled with his instinct for self-expression. He wrote rapidly. By dark he was well launched upon a drama of antiquity in classical form, a drama in which Nero was the principal figure, that monarch being depicted as a great artist, bored with omnipotence and vainly seeking an outlet for his hectic dreams. The burning of Rome was but a means of appeasing his gigantic vision. The drama was for the most part in blank verse. Sometimes in the choruses rhyme appeared. But the lyrical impulse was constantly abandoned: the young poet merely followed it when it came uppermost. It was supplanted occasionally by irregular metre, sometimes by prose.

The work was not without power, and Stanford West felt it. The next day he returned to it with renewed energy. For a week he followed the inspiration, overjoyed with his new accomplishment. When his task was completed it marked a new epoch in the boy's life.

Exhilarated, he showed the work to his mother and father. He was stunned at their attitude toward it. While writing he had been unconscious of perpetrating

a sacrilege. Its form and composition alone had appealed to him. He had taken little thought of his subject. He was therefore shocked at his father's harsh words and at his mother's wounded feelings. "You have talent," his father told him. "Why do you turn it into such channels? Are there so few worthy subjects in the world that you must use your gifts in defending an ignoble cause?" And his mother said to him: "Your ideas make me very unhappy. I know there is power for good in you, and I want to see it come out. It breaks my heart that you should write such things. I hope you will never know what it means to have a child you love turn against you."

The boy did not entirely understand. He could not see that his unhappiness was due to the clash of two different viewpoints. So deeply offended were his mother and father, so earnestly did they plead with him, that he began to question himself, afraid lest, after all, the fault lay with him. He strove to look at the world through their eyes, and while striving thus, he wrote many things embodying his insincerities. He knew these efforts were inept and worthless, for he had forced himself to write them and the task had given him no pleasure. When they met with commendation he was confused and unable to penetrate the mysteries of the situation.

So the summer went. Those of his writings he liked most gave pain to his parents: those from which he received no pleasurable reaction met with approval and encouragement. Many times he was on the point of defending himself, but he recalled the unhappiness such a course had produced in the past. He recalled also the letters of Alice Carlisle. She would not have upheld him. He felt that certain of his writings would offend her also. Accordingly he refrained from any open conflict, half convinced of the error of his own attitude. But he felt the restraint, and inwardly revolted. He could not entirely overcome his ingrained self-confidence.

VII

THE time was drawing near when he would enter upon his collegiate work. His father had assisted him in his choice of an institution. It was one of the largest and most conservative in the country and specialized in those branches of the liberal arts which he would most need for his future as a pedagogue. Furthermore, two of the Professors in the courses he was likely to take had been school-mates of his father. Joseph West wrote to them both, telling them of his son and asking them to keep an eye on the boy. Professor Bainbridge, of the department of ancient languages, offered to assist the son of his old friend in finding quarters and in meeting the preliminary difficulties of his new environment. Stanford West's entry had already been arranged for with the board of administration. It had accepted the certificates of his graduation, thereby permitting him to enter without preliminary examinations.

The boy contemplated with no little satisfaction this new step. He believed it would afford him the freedom he desired. He had never been master of his own actions, even of his own thoughts, and he saw in the University a welcome outlet. He would write what he desired; he would express his ideas without fear of unpleasant consequences. He believed he would find others who, like himself, had chafed at the restrictions of home life, and who would understand him, as he would understand them. He realized now that he needed the companionship of some one in whom he might confide; in such an exchange of confidences he was sure to receive stimulation. He looked forward with joyous anticipation to these unknown friends awaiting him at the University.

Confronted thus by the possibility of intimate comradeship, his memories of Alice Carlisle became less appealing. How inadequately he had spoken to her regarding his true self! How little indeed she would have understood his unusual beliefs! He recalled his conversations with her: they had been devoid of all genuine expressions of opinion on his part. Even the verses he wrote for her had been limited by his consideration for her tastes. He realized that had she been with him this last summer he probably would not have written many of the things he did—things which he knew constituted his best work. As he visualized the world into which he was about to enter, the world he was leaving behind, as well as its people, appeared small and inconsequent by comparison.

His day of departure found him in a buoyant frame of mind, and he took leave of Greenwood without regret. His parting was not without its unpleasantness, however. His mother's tears, his father's tense face, the admonitions, the expressions of hope, the pleadings and the injunctions—all this affected him. He had no intention of heeding his parents' warnings. He knew he would not fulfil their hopes in the manner they wished. His previous resolutions had defeated their parting prayers. He had decided to make use of his life at the University according to his own doctrines. For years he had craved freedom. Now that it was within his grasp, he intended to turn it to his own ends. He felt no sorrow at parting, and was ashamed at his indifference in the face of the undisguised grief of his mother and father. Out of pity for them he pretended sorrow; and his dramatic masquerade of emotion filled him with a sense of guilt.

As the train moved away, he was conscious of the sudden enjoyment of complete liberty. His mood was gay, almost irresponsible. The country-side and the hills of his childhood fell far behind without his experiencing the least impression of pain. It exhilarated him to think he

was escaping from them. Only when he called to mind his days with Alice Carlisle did he feel the intimacy of the environment he was leaving. The other memories of his youth—his solitary walks, his hours of writing, his early passion for music and poetry—these did not touch him or make him wish to turn back. They were too closely associated with the binding influences of his home life. Through the fabric of his boyhood dreams obtruded the ugly angles of parental restraint. He was escaping, like a fugitive, from a life which stifled him. Even the rain which began to fall in the early afternoon and blotted out the world beyond, failed to oppress him. He was rushing forward into a life of illimitable opportunities and boundless freedom, and the thought made him radiant.

At Cambridge West went direct to the house of Professor Bainbridge. The latter was a tall, elderly man, slightly stooped, with the deep, resonant voice of a professional orator. He greeted West with distant geniality, and expatiated on the ideals of the University. Finally he advised the young man to seek quarters in one of the dormitories. There he would be in close touch with his fellows: he would constitute an integral part of the student life.

"I believe in boys entering fully into the undergraduate activities," he said. "Too much work and isolation, like too much diversion, is bad. If you live in a private house in the city, you are liable to fall into one of these two bad habits. You will either get too little recreation—or too much. The life of the dormitories balances things."

West thanked him and departed. He did not intend to put himself under the jurisdiction of the University authorities; and he did not desire to participate in the student life. These points he had settled in his mind long before. He wished to be alone and did not fear the consequences of such a course. He was not sufficiently

democratic to care to impose upon himself the obligation of promiscuous companionship. He desired but few friends, and these he intended to choose carefully. Conscious of the richness of his future, he looked upon his first steps as important. Though impatient to meet his contemporaries, he feared lest he might unwillingly be drawn into a social *milieu* uncongenial to him. He deemed his safest course lay in a temporary withdrawal from his fellows. Thus from a place apart he could judge and select.

The following day he found a pleasant room in a quiet shaded street in Arlington Heights, ten minutes' walk from the campus. The house in which he was installed was an old-fashioned structure owned by two elderly sisters of simple and devout habits. There was but one boarder beside himself, a serious young man absorbed in post-graduate work. West's room was large and well equipped for study. It had two wide windows, a desk with a student lamp, some book-shelves, a small bed and two comfortable chairs.

"I could wish for nothing better," he wrote home. "The meals are simple but excellent; the outlook from my windows is as peaceful as if I were in Greenwood. I feel that I am going to do excellent work here; it is so much better than being in a dormitory with the noise and the restrictions. The walk to and from classes will do me a world of good. I am by myself, and feel almost unbelievably happy."

For a month he was entirely absorbed in his studies. His new life pleased him, and he worked incessantly save for occasional walks by the river and through the country-side. The year was in full decadence. The breath of autumn had set the trees ablaze. He found new beauty in the country by-ways. His freedom intoxicated him. Once or twice he had come in close contact with the student life, but he instinctively turned from it. No temperamental affinities existed between him and

the infantile diversions of his class-mates. He had met no one with whom he wished to be friends; yet he feared the consequences of too remote a withdrawal from the student body. Occasionally he attended meetings of his class. Professor Bainbridge, hearing from Joseph West of the boy's instinct for writing, introduced him to the board of older students who edited the University *Monthly*. The conservative prejudices of that organization displeased and repelled him. On request he submitted many of his writings to the editorial board. Its criticisms were not dissimilar to those of his mother and father. The editor-in-chief, a chlorotic and affected senior, reproved him for his boldness, but admitted there was talent in his work.

In depressed spirits he returned to his room. He had expected at the University the spirit of healthy freedom, of lofty daring, of fine heresy; he had found an atmosphere of academic piety. He sent other contributions to the *Monthly*—those his parents had liked because of their inoffensiveness. The following week he found one of them in print. The affair sickened him, and he withdrew again from the student life.

VIII

WINTER came with its bleak, white days and its long evenings. Stanford West suffered from disquiet. Loneliness was gaining on him. The stark twilight and his enforced staying indoors saddened him. At such times it was his custom to seek consolation in his personal writings. But to whom could he show the things he wrote? Where were those friends he had thought to find at the University—friends with firm hearts and valiant thoughts in whom he could confide, assured of understanding? Restless and disappointed he threw himself into the University life, hoping to find another like himself whose soul was in revolt against the pallid dogmas of the world. He attended student gatherings. He frequented the theatres with small groups of his classmates. He appeared at receptions and informal teas. Occasionally he called at the sanctum of the *Monthly* and joined in the literary discussions. He had a capability for making friends, and it was but a short time before he was on cordial terms with a score of the more serious-minded students whose social headquarters were the publication rooms of the *Monthly*.

The cordiality was but meagre consolation. He took small intellectual pleasure in his friendships. These young men had all adopted the air of their institution. They wore the cloak of conservatism with satisfied mien. West was disappointed: he had hoped for better things. But his true feelings he kept hidden. He remained always on his guard lest he should offend those who had extended him their friendship. He was silent regarding his real beliefs, and submitted to the *Monthly* board only

those writings of his whose ethical conventionality was plainly manifest. However, he experienced a mild sensation of pleasure in the social side of his new life. He participated in the drinking bouts, and smoked when those about him smoked. There were hours of light-heartedness at the theatres and cafés. There were processions and cavalcades of youthful roisterers in celebration of athletic victories. And there were also literary and artistic discussions in the late afternoons. In all these things West found the fascination of novelty. If his fellows were not heretics and high dreamers like himself, they at least were young and spontaneous and exuberant.

But such a life could not long satisfy him. Months passed: the edge wore off these artificial pleasures. His mood went. No longer was he attracted by the divertisements of his fellows. Little by little he began to withdraw. The serious side of his work again came to the surface. Disgust at the timidity of the literary ideals held by the *Monthly* board supplanted his tolerance. He reproached himself for his long indulgences, and turned to his studies with reanimated vigour. He felt only revulsion for the opinions of his fellow-students—opinions absorbed from the narrow, reactionary standards of the University. He regarded his former complaisance toward the editors of *Monthly* as weakness, and censured himself for having connived with it by permitting the publication of his more colourless writings.

Nevertheless he found it nearly as difficult to cut free from his friends as to endure the life concomitant with keeping them. They were pleasant, diverting fellows: they had always acted generously toward him. After all, there was no reason for an unpleasant break. Yet he feared he might in time come to accept their point of view with complete toleration. Already he had felt the tremendous impact of conservatism in the University life. He had seen the engines of repression actively at work upon one or two of his class-mates. He feared

a similar fate for himself. His ideas were far from being crystallized. He had found no satisfactory answers to the problems of life. His mind was indecisive, and he knew from past experience that his hopes were often deceptive. He knew also how mercurial were his predilections and desires. Sensing thus the critical aspect of his position he feared lest his opinions should be influenced. He was now at his most vulnerable stage of development.

Of one thing, however, he was satisfied: his ability to succeed in whatever province he directed his energies. Although on entering the University he had partially decided to carry out his father's plans for his future, such a course had receded into the realm of mere possibilities. His new sense of freedom, his increasing joy in writing and the fast waning of Alice Carlisle's influence, inspired him to consider the advisability of new endeavours. Though the career planned by his father had not been definitely put aside, he no longer set it before him as a goal. If, after four years of University work, he felt himself fitted for no other vocation, he would follow it. His immediate concern, however, was self-development: it alone would determine his future.

Therefore, he was uneasy concerning the influence of his present friendships. And he was likewise uneasy as to the effects the loss of those friendships might produce. He hesitated some time. Then he decided to meet the dilemma by reforming his fellows. He would overcome their hypocrisies, thereby making them worthy of him. It was a dangerous and unpleasant course, but the spirit of reformation, intensified by his very uncertainty, laid hold upon him. He believed his attempts at proselytizing would be greeted with enthusiasm. Assuredly these young men were not by nature effeminate and timid. They had adopted this self-satisfied attitude of reserve, not instinctively, but because the organisms of their environment dictated a complacent opposition

to innovation. Given the stimulus of a leader they would be eager to throw their support to the side of more daring and robust doctrines.

Accordingly West drew up a treatise setting forth his doctrines and advocating a vigorous and independent course of action. At the next meeting of the *Monthly* board to which contributors were admitted, he arose and asked permission to speak. The first great moment of his life had arrived. As he drew forth his paper, his face was flushed with excitement. His hand trembled and his heart beat exultantly. He was filled with the zealous fervour of the reformer. He commenced reading, at first hesitatingly; but soon his voice grew vibrant with passion. He became intoxicated with his ideas, assured of his cause. His manner was earnest and dictatorial.

He began with generalizations concerning literature, ancient and modern. He pointed out the opportunities afforded by the University for independent development, and enumerated the dangers which beset the younger and weaker students. He described the conservative spirit which animated every phase of university life, and raised a warning against succumbing to it. Becoming more personal, he severely criticized the ideals of the *Monthly* which, he declared, had unconsciously fallen a victim to the contented conservatism of the institution. He berated its editors for stifling, by narrow and exacting policies, the talents of its contributors. The most virile student writer, he said, was in danger of feminization from its academic injunctions. Instead of being an influence for free self-development, it squeezed all the juices of daring and modernity out of every man caught in its vise. He pleaded for a broader and more masculine policy—a policy of freedom and aggressiveness. The *Monthly* had potentialities for good: it might be a forum for fine positive expressions. But as it was now run it put a premium on imitation, tameness and innocuity. In short, it made intellectual cowards of its

contributors by suppressing what was bravest and most vital.

He ended by inviting his hearers to revolt against the University's influence. He proposed a reformation of the unwritten rules of the *Monthly,* so that henceforth it would apply to its contributions literary and not theological standards. Inanity, he said, was no criterion of merit. There was no æsthetic value in the sentimentalities of democracy. By judging every man's work by its inherent worth, and not by its inoffensiveness, the *Monthly* might become an outlet for the finest creative impulses in the student body. It would thus stimulate and chasten the instinct to accomplish work of a high and independent order.

West sat down amid silence. His earnestness had hypnotized the horrified students. But presently a member of the board leaped to his feet. He denounced West's remarks as an insult, not only to those present, but to the entire University. He added he was unaware that the *Monthly* editors were as incompetent as had been intimated, and suggested they were perhaps better equipped to manage their affairs than a youthful upstart whose university experience had been of only a few months' duration. The editor-in-chief, white with anger, broke in. He announced that writing for the *Monthly* was not compulsory, and that those whose tastes and opinions were so unquestioningly superior to the board need not suffer further abasement by sending in contributions. He went on to explain that the *Monthly* had been conceived in the spirit of the University, that its policies were stamped with professorial approval, that the faculty and the *Monthly* board had for many years discharged their duties without young Mr. West's assistance, that they probably would continue to do so, and that, while admitting this critic to be a very superior person, he trusted he would be pardoned should he refuse to adopt the suggestions put forth.

A general denunciation followed. The younger men, striving for the prestige which a regular position on the board would give them, looked at the vanquished reformer and smiled incredulously. His conduct had both startled and amused them.

Unable to withstand their polite derision, West arose and faced them angrily. "You are a lot of cowards," he said. "You fawn hypocritically before the board in order to see your inanities in print. You haven't the courage to write what you believe. You prefer a little spurious and worthless honour to the cleanliness of your own consciences. You don't know what beauty and heroism are. You want a smooth and comfortable life —that's the height of your ideals. You aren't willing to fight for a principle; you're afraid something might happen to you. You aren't worth a decent man's consideration. You're weaklings without authority being led about by a board of weaklings who have authority. Your attitude is sickening, but that of the board members is more sickening. They're in a position to do something worth while. But they're tenth-rate imitators and don't dare. You don't protest, because you're afraid of the consequences. I thought there was a little manhood in you; but you're all cowards."

His eyes were narrowed. His arm was rigid, and his finger quivered in the faces of the astonished students. The editor walked up to him, trembling with nervousness. He was a sedate yoúng man, and strove for self-possession in the face of his anger.

"We didn't invite you to come here, West," he said with an attempt at control. "Your opinions don't interest us, and inasmuch as we don't suit you it would be best for you to go."

West, furious, surveyed him sneeringly.

"Do you think anything could induce me to stay here? I was a fool for thinking any of you possessed stamina.

My pride alone would keep me out of the company of such hypocrites."

The editor put his hand on the other's arm as if to force him from the room. West was incensed beyond control. He clenched his fist and swung it heavily against the editor's face.

Not until the following day did he realize the completeness of his isolation. News of the affair spread quickly. At classes his former associates ignored him. He met several of them on the campus; they passed him without recognition. Professor Bainbridge sent for him and talked to him seriously and without sympathy. West listened without a word and went away. Other members of the faculty treated him coolly and paid scant attention to his work. His action had created a scandal. Students and professors with one accord set him aside.

On several occasions he sought to avenge himself with satire. For one of his optional theses he wrote a stinging attack entitled "Intellectual Cowardice." When he arose to read it he was silenced. The good nature with which he accepted the rebuff merely strengthened the enmity against him. His solitude pained him. It was no longer a voluntary solitude, but the solitude of the defeated. He had not withdrawn from his fellows; he had been requested to quit their company. But his fighting spirit had been heightened. He knew the thrill of opposition. Alone he was combating the world, and the very preponderance of his odds increased his fortitude. His enemies strengthened him. He was proud, and he determined to fight to the death.

In his warfare against conservatism and hypocrisy he consequently became more and more energetic. He let no opportunity pass by which he might deliver a blow. His temerity threw his opponents off their guard. He unleashed his sarcasm whenever an opening afforded. He carried his head high, and laughed in the serious faces of his antagonists. His case became notorious. In many

of the newer students he inspired a secret admiration. His tongue was sharp, his satire biting; and those of his opponents who challenged him were unable to cope with him verbally.

Finally he was ignored, and desolation claimed him. He added another course of study to his already crowded calendar, throwing himself into his studies with refreshed energy. Thus he sought to master his ennui. But his rebellion had taught him many things. Now that he had crossed swords with his contemporaries he knew himself more intimately. He had come face to face with the tendencies of his age, and had been repelled by them. He realized that conflict, even though unsuccessful, was preferable to the smooth and nerveless life of acquiescence. Had he formerly possessed any vestige of the democratic ideal, his experience would have dissipated it. He now knew himself to be temperamentally an aristocrat, an enemy to the comfortable humanitarianism of his fellow-students. He understood for the first time that beauty and merit, divorced from current ethics, were the property of the few. They could be retained only through struggle and suffering. He was willing to pay this high price in order to retain them. He had received a foretaste of the parching conflicts which trouble men's souls, and he was enlivened and inspired thereby.

He wrote to his father: "For a month I have been at odds with the student life. I have waged a desperate warfare against the pious conservatism of the University, and have attempted to proselytize some of the younger men. But they have all been caught in the academic current. They recite the words of their elders and think the thoughts of the professors. For my pains I have been made an outcast; but I do not want this fact to worry you any more than it does me. I feel it a compliment to be denied the companionship of weaklings. The affair has only strengthened my opinion of myself.

It has given me courage, and it has taught me that a cleanly intellectual life is a lonely one. I feel stronger than ever before. I never knew until now how stimulating enemies were. I am not unhappy, as you may think, for I have been able to look into myself deeply. I am not entirely satisfied, and at times I am melancholy, but who save the great majority are ever satisfied? And isn't melancholy the price of being free from one's inferiors? . . .

"However, I am never mournful as I used to be. My very sadness thrills me, for it is the result of an honest adherence to my beliefs. It pains me sometimes to stand aside and see the other students happy in their mutual companionship, but when I realize that my isolation is due to my steadfastness of purpose, I do not feel my pain so keenly. In my belief in myself and in the realization that some day I will surpass in true greatness these very students who have demanded my retirement from their midst, I find a consolation I would not exchange for all the comfortable delights of popularity."

IX

It was at this time that Stanford West was to find a friend of the kind he had so long desired. He had about given up hope of meeting a student like himself, a student with whom he might interchange ideas and beliefs without fear of misconception. But one morning he received a letter which filled him with enthusiasm. It was a brief and direct note from a young Russian Jew, named Phillip Seminoff, then in his second year at the University. Seminoff had heard of West's defiance of the *Monthly* board. He made inquiries, and his esteem had increased with every report. In his letter he stated simply that he admired West's bravery and was in perfect accord with the other's stand. He was glad to know there was some one in the University sufficiently courageous to act in so straightforward a manner. He ended by expressing the hope that he might soon meet West for a friendly talk.

Phillip Seminoff proved a vigorous and intelligent spirit. His mind was quick and responsive, his enthusiasm spontaneous and undisguised. He had not passed that point where his atheism was an accepted condition; in his anti-religious beliefs he displayed the fiery zeal of the intellectual novice. In appearance he was rugged and unkempt. He spoke with intensity and his words were accompanied by strained gesticulations. He had revolted against the University spirit during his first month at the institution and had refused to participate in any of the student activities. Like West he suffered from the solitude of the vanquished. And like West his solitude had strengthened his hate and augmented his prowess.

The first meeting of the two young heretics lasted for hours. Immediately they sensed the like-mindedness and consciousness of kind which existed between them. They liked each other honestly and without formality. They were frank in their avowals of friendship, and expressed their admiration for each other with an eagerness born of long deprivation. Both were hungry for companionship and understanding, and neither disguised his pleasure at having found the other.

Their friendship ripened. Scarcely a day went by during which they did not come together. West showed Seminoff his writings, who, reading them eagerly, expressed his admiration. He had a sane, critical mind, and his admiration was not the mere platitude of friendship.

"You have the gift," he would tell West. "You have the instinct for beauty, the savour of rhythmical sentences, the feeling for the inevitable juxtaposition of words. Your greatness is but a question of time." Then he added dogmatically, the impulse of the preacher being in him: "But you must be true to yourself. You must be careful of the world's influences. There will be people in your life who will try to drag you down to the mediocre level and instil in you the commonplaces of a sentimental universe. Your course is a lonely one; but see to it that you put the evil teachers behind you."

The two young men walked together and debated incessantly. They felt the eager joy of youth—youth with its ardent dreams, its high aspirations, its love of heroism, its simplicity of heart. Stanford West now had a friend with whom he was in total accord. He wrote much, for he had an audience who understood him. His thoughts were bolder, his beliefs more secure, for he possessed a comrade who would listen to him and encourage him.

One day he received a long letter from Alice Carlisle. He was puzzled by the fact that he experienced no emotion at her words. Hitherto he had counted on her for

comfort. When she was late in answering his letters he had become restless. His sudden lack of response at her words troubled him: he was unable to account for this change in himself. When he wrote her the following week, assuring her of his devotion, he experienced a feeling of guilt. Was it possible, he asked himself, that he no longer loved her? And, if such was the case, what would be the outcome? Though he tried to convince himself that his indifference was temporary, it became more and more painful to read her letters. He was on the point of writing her the truth, but pity for her halted him. Perhaps in time his feeling would change. He decided to wait.

Home for the holidays, he saw her again; but his emotions were not resuscitated. She in nowise compensated for his need of Seminoff's friendship. Her interest in him, once so exalting, now failed to bring any comfort. He felt the inadequacy of her intellectual equipment to cope with his thoughts. Once she reproved him for an idea he expressed, and he found it difficult to restrain his resentment at her interference. Yet her love for him was so tender, her hope so high, her admiration so genuine, that he could not force himself to disillusion her by a confession of the change which had come over him. She spoke continually of their future. His devotion she took for granted with absolute faith. She recounted her plans when he should have completed his university work. She gave numerous indications of her dependence on him, and trusted in his protection with childish ingenuousness. On the dream of his love she had erected the edifice of her entire life.

West felt the tentacles of her love binding him to inaction. Had he understood the reason for the sudden curtailment of his love for her, he would have known what course to pursue. But again his own uncertainty stayed him. He was cognizant of the chameleon quality of his nature, and tried to convince himself that his present

mood would not prove permanent. Accordingly he sought to disguise his indifference. In so doing he overstepped the bounds of even his previous expressions of love. His instinct for drama led him to the most ardent avowals.

Alice Carlisle, eager for adoration, questioned not the sincerity of his words, and when autumn brought separation her anguish was far deeper than the previous year. But Stanford West welcomed the approach of school work. It would end the emotional farce of the summer: it would give him back his friend.

His second year at the University was one of the happiest he ever experienced. After three months' absence he took a sentimental delight in the city and in the river paths. Although the scenes round the University were intertwined with the anguish of his first months amid them, their new association with the friendship of Seminoff blotted out the older memories and filled him with delight. His friend was awaiting him. West was deeply moved. His emotions at again seeing Seminoff were greater than he had anticipated. The servitudes of life, which in a measure had always oppressed him, were lightened by the intellectual security his friendship assured him.

That year three other youths, like themselves courageous and liberty-loving, were discovered. One, Antony Andersen, was a rugged and mild-mannered Norwegian who had aspirations in sculpture. Another, Frederick Latch, vaguely believed in his future as a great dramatist. The third, a swarthy, thick-set youth of German descent, named Carl Hagedorn, had a passion for modern philosophies. One evening a week these five young heretics came together and disputed bravely on the ways of men and the world. They were in disagreement on many questions, but it was understood that every man should be allowed his personal beliefs without rancour on the part of the others. On one point, however, there was no

dissonance of thought—their contempt for the smooth and comfortable conservatism of their fellow-students and the university authorities.

The year passed quickly. With regret West contemplated its termination. He had lived these months of companionship to their full. His mind was composed and free from unpleasant anticipation. He worked unhaltingly at his studies. Few days escaped which did not bring him the joy and relief of personal writing. The year was rich in his discoveries of the great men of the past. He attended concerts and found new pleasure in music. Through Hagedorn he became acquainted with the philosophers. Andersen led him to art exhibitions and imbued him with enthusiasm for the ancient masters of plastic form and the modern colour heretics.

He himself planned a great work—a literary drama in blank verse—a work which would embody and set forth the lucid mind of Greece. It was to be aimed at the æsthetic pedantry and academic superstitions of the day. At the same time it was to imprison within its lines the beauty and glamour of paganism. For weeks he laboured on the scenario, perfecting his conception of its ensemble. His mind was soaked in its theme; he was conscious of the courage and *élan* which his associations inspired.

Too soon summer arrived. The synod of five disbanded. Its members went their different ways. Once more at Greenwood, West became melancholy. He missed the friction of disputes, the healthy clash of ideas, the generous companionship. He attempted to work, but the spirit of endeavour had evaded him. Demands were made on his time by Alice Carlisle, and he succumbed to them. When the summer had gone he had nothing to show for three months of idleness. He had done a little work on his drama; but it had not pleased him, and he had thrown it away.

Another fact heightened his despondency. It had now

become known he was to marry Alice Carlisle. The girl had suggested that they keep it hidden no longer. At first West had hesitated, but finally had yielded to her entreaties. He informed his father of his desire. Joseph West was pleased. It augured well for the boy's future. Judge Carlisle also expressed approval.

Stanford West now felt the inexorability of his future. He knew he did not love Alice Carlisle, and there was something monstrous in the fact that he was engaged to her. He knew that cowardice had been responsible for it, and this added to his misery. Yet what could he have done? Was it not indeed possible that his sentimental interest in the girl would revive? Had he told her the truth he might have been guilty of unwarrantably bringing about future unhappiness for them both. He argued with himself that such was the case. But he could not escape the sensation that the blind forces of fate were carrying him on to a predestined end.

X

Fresh disappointment awaited him at the University. At the last moment Seminoff found it impossible to return. In his letter he gave West no definite reason, stating merely that the world of commerce had absorbed his ambitions. West's despondency over the loss of his friend was deepened by sympathy for the other's fate. Hagedorn had gone to Leipzig for the summer and had decided not to return. Andersen had concluded to devote his entire time to his art. Latch's father had died, and the weight of business affairs had fallen on him.

West was broken by the news. He went about his tasks joylessly. He worked late into the night, ceasing only when physical fatigue overpowered him. He permitted himself but few lonely walks. Memories of the preceding year assailed him and left him dispirited. He laboured half-heartedly on his drama. There was no one now to share his ecstasy of creation. He wrote to his former friends, but their letters could not supply that need for companionship which in him was so deep and inherent an instinct. He found no new consolations for his bereavement. Recollections tortured him, and nothing would quench his anguish. Desperately he strove to efface the days shared with his four friends—days of simple assurance, of immaculate joy, of divine flashes. He strove in vain. As he watched the slow vermilion death of the year his old sadness at the mystery of nature returned to him. The rattling of the fallen leaves, the brisk whispering of the wind in the branches, the white dusks, the cold blue dawns—these things affected him deeply.

Then came a change. His loneliness took the form of a vague but persistent desire. It was not an inclination toward any specific thing. He longed for the warmth and the glamour of romance: but it was the vast, intangible universe of romanticism which called to him. He had sentimental hours in which his brain was crowded with the imaginary figures of women and imaginary deeds of valour. He dreamed of meeting tender and lovely girls who would pour out upon him a love as intense as the one he imagined himself capable of giving in return. He conjured up in detail the mental and physical characteristics of this nebulous companion, and she affected him almost like a reality. Being thus in love with love, the aspect of the world about him softened and became intimate.

Walking among the dry leaves in the sinister November twilights, he could feel his temples throb with an emotional fever. The sensation was different from that which the spectacle of nature had heretofore aroused in him. No longer could he dissociate the external world from the illusion of the girl whom his imagination had wrought. She followed him wherever he went. She intruded herself upon his loneliness, inflaming his blood as Alice Carlisle had never done. The brilliant autumnal vines on the garden wall opposite his study window took on a mellow beauty they had never possessed on previous years. There was a new radiance in the luminous moonlight.

Life became more personal, and West grew conscious of unseen presences. As he walked the wide streets of the city's suburbs, every old stone house became, in his eyes, a dwelling-place for romance. Perhaps in any one of them he might find the materialization of his persistent vision. Behind those grey walls, in a quiet, ancient room rich with old tapestries and dimly lighted, the unknown girl awaited his coming. Should he enter one of these old houses she would rise and turn to him with

eager arms, aware of his longing and filled with that same gentle affection that he would bring to her. Beauty constantly called to him in the guise of sex, and whenever a pretty girl passed him on the street he would look at her longingly, and his heart would grow warm.

Often at night he crossed the river into the great city beyond, and dined alone in those subdued and unconventional cafés where youth finds an outlet. About him sat oblivious couples in cushioned alcoves, radiant with the lustre of new love. Students made merry with young girls of pencilled eyes and painted cheeks. At such times West felt more keenly than ever the urgent call in his blood. The bright flushed faces, the wheedling laughter, the glittering shoulders, the silken ankles, the stolen kisses, the light-hearted music—this pageantry of inconsequential and careless youth fired him more strongly than the wine he drank. He had a consuming desire to make love to one of these amorous girls whose laughter thrilled him and whose satin-clad bodies stirred his pulses.

Maturity seemed but a vague condition, set far ahead along his path. Those intellectual struggles, which for years had automatically imposed upon him an unnatural asceticism, lost their significance. Their importance now appeared to him to have been greatly exaggerated. Having no basis of comparison, he had been unable to judge their true proportions. Now the physical side of him was asserting itself. Formerly he had been unconscious of its existence, except when he had felt the warm contact of Alice Carlisle. But even the emotion she had aroused had been intellectual, for he had idealized his sensations. Now he yearned for the sensuousness of life, the myriad experiences of the flesh, the transient surprises of external beauty. Colours caressed him: perfumes shook him: music sent fiery shivers through his body. He read Flaubert, Gautier, Pierre Louys and Boccaccio. Life became for him a panorama of colour and romance, a phantasmagoria of the senses. His de-

sire for sensation eclipsed his desire for achievement. Secretly he subscribed to the philosophy of *The Rubáiyát* which he now read for the first time. He found himself unhampered by a conventional conscience. His reading and thinking had convinced him of the fallacy of standardized morality. Already there were strong evidences of the Latinist in his ethical viewpoint. He had reverted like an atavism to the paganism of his early forebears. He wondered if he was the return swing of the pendulum, the outward stroke of which had been represented by the two preceding generations of his family. He was intrigued by the hedonism in his blood. Life called him to play, and his spirit responded with Dionysian ardour.

He looked back upon his days with Alice Carlisle, wondering how he could have overlooked the sensuality of her love. Was he indeed the same dreamy creature who had found consolation in lonely walks with her among the hills, and who had planned a distant future when the present contained so much of joy? He had scarcely noticed the rounded softness of her breast. Had he met her but now for the first time, how different would have been his kisses! How close and long he would have held her body to his! How eagerly he would have indulged in all those subtle delights of sex he once ignored! Now it was too late. She had become familiar to him. She was no longer a new adventure, no longer the epitome of romantic desire as were these unknown girls who passed him each night in the dim streets and smiled to him across the smoke-haze of the city's cafés.

There were nights when he would go to the city and seek that simulacrum of romance to be found in the chance acquaintances of girls in the streets. He would sit with them in private dining-rooms of noisy cafés and try to forget the sordid commercialism which lay at the bottom of these conquests. But he derived only meagre satisfaction from such episodes. Sometimes his companions were young and not unlovely; but this was not

the thing he sought. The reality of such adventures did not dispel the illusion which constantly led his spirit on. These loves of a single night were like draughts of warm water to a parching thirst. Occasionally as he sat in a crowded restaurant with a young girl who had smiled at him in the street, he would be conscious of the presence of other girls about him. And though they were no more attractive than the one at his side, his imagination would play about them until he forgot he was not alone. Thus the consummation of his desire seemed always to escape him. The illusion would vanish the moment his fingers had touched it. It was too subtle a thing to analyse. Yet the fever of pursuit was on him, and night after night it led him into the surging vortex of the city. Though he studied diligently, his preoccupation in the search of sensations turned his mind from his future and from the ambitions which once had driven him.

Months passed. He began to tire of his fruitless endeavours to capture the illusion of romance which pervaded him. He suffered no remorse. To the contrary, he was secretly proud of his experiences. They had given him knowledge of a kind he had never possessed. He had touched a stratum of life which, before, he had but vaguely understood. His judgments of the world, of its hopes and fears, its yearnings and aspirations, had undergone a change. Stanford West was not inclined to sentimentality, and his insight into the great change and interchange of human relationships was no longer clouded by prejudice. Certain distortions in his former viewpoint had become more normal since his personal entry into this new phase of life. And though his experiences had left him disheartened, he would not have wiped them out of his consciousness had he been able.

Now that he had temporarily tired of excursions into the extra-legal walks of life, he was invaded by the inclination to turn them to account. His instinct for creation was still alive. The life of actuality, with its mys-

teries and its hidden founts of enjoyment, had for the moment distracted him. Now physical satiety, without spiritual gratification, had set in, and once again he turned to his personal writings. He had acquired new material for his compositions. He had touched life on its grimmest side—lightly, to be sure, but with sufficient intimacy to experience those undercurrents which lie beneath the superficial serenity of things. And in these swift-moving currents, wherein motives and causes are hidden, he had seen men and women spun onward and onward, powerless to resist. He had kissed the bought lips of those in whom hope was dead; he had bartered for sacred things: and he had deliberately slaughtered many of his finest ideals. He was no longer the same. New facets in his nature had opened. New vistas of speculation led forth from his brain. His mind had registered powerful and compelling memories. His conception of the world was no longer flat and panoramic. His vision, like that of one who suddenly looks through a stereoscope, acquired a hitherto unperceived sense of form and perspective. He was acutely conscious of reality. His introspection gave way to external contemplation.

When he began again to write he was less personal. The inflections of his own nature were set aside. He began to project himself into the consciences of others, to analyse motives, to seek the cause beneath the effect. The purely decorative vanished from his diction. He began a novel in which the entire action was engendered by the instincts of its characters. He used his personal experiences as bases for his incidents. He tried to depict humanity, not as a mass of marionettes, some apotheosizing virtue, others vice; but as beings at once weak and strong, good and bad, humane and cruel. Was he himself not antipodal? Had he not drunk of the world's depravity? Had he not shared with a girl of the streets the first physical experiences of love? Yet was he wholly

vicious? Were all his aspirations dead? And again, had he not played the coward's part in his relation with Alice Carlisle? Had not his hypocrisy toward her been the fruits of weakness? On the other hand, he had fought alone against the student body. He had persisted in his beliefs with heroic courage. Stanford West, pondering these contradictions, found within himself the duality of life, the great paradox of human existence.

Thus by his immersion in the squalor of intemperate living, and by his complete submission to the grosser dictates of the body, he had profited intellectually. He had risen from his sensualities with a clearer vision and a surer judgment. He had found at last an answer to the problem of right and wrong. The answer did not astonish him. He had always known it unconsciously. They were one and the same—this right and wrong—inalienable and eternal. They were susceptible of interchange, according to people and conditions. Good and bad were instinctive and personal codes, the expediences of environment, exalting here, ruining there. Why had his conscience not tortured him those early mornings as he rode back from the city, pale and enervated, with trembling hands and heavy eyes? Surely he had sinned, as the world knows that word. But just as surely he was calm and unperturbed at the thought of it.

Stanford West incorporated these psychological discoveries in his writings. He had now returned to work with passionate eagerness, for once again a tyrannical ambition for greatness had laid hold on him. With his own eyes he had beheld life, stripped and nude; and he knew the touch of her gaunt and brutal body. The unattainable desire for romance was still in his blood, but at last he had begun to recognize the impossibility of its fulfilment. Therefore he sought to embody it in his writing. He worked late into the night and was busy again at dawn, his soul tortured with a feverish unrest.

It was at this time that he came to know Irene Brenner.

Her face was not unfamiliar to him, for he had seen her occasionally with the older students of the University. One night in a café he had caught her eyes for a second, and there had flashed to him the knowledge that she had been aware of his gaze. She was a conspicuous figure in that part of university life which begins when the day's work is over, and West had heard her name many times. There were hints concerning escapades of which she was a part, and it was rumoured that a wealthy senior the year before had been disinherited and compelled to leave the University on her account. Her beauty alone would have been sufficient to attract undergraduate attention, even had there been no fantastic reports concerning her. In themselves the stories were harmless enough, but they were of the sort which stimulate speculation, especially in minds but recently versed in life's sophistications.

Her beauty had appealed to West when he first saw her. It was at once extravagant and subtle, with an undeniable touch of the exotic in it: it was said her mother had been a French Jewess. Her eyes were large and far apart—a characteristic which, when accentuated by a small straight nose, bordered on the abnormal. Her lips were full, and had her face not been a trifle broad, her mouth would have appeared too large. Her cheek-bones were higher than the Anglo-Saxon standard of beauty permits, and there was a cleft in her oval chin which augmented the unusualness of her appearance. Her hair, dark brown and thick, hung loose, almost in disorder, about her temples, completely hiding her ears. Her Jewish ancestry was particularly evident in her rich colouring, not as dark as olive yet darker than rose. Her body was full, but she dressed in a way which made her appear almost slender. West had unconsciously remarked the difference between her rich beauty and the delicate prettiness of Alice Carlisle. He had also made a comparison of the temperaments of the two girls, the

one impulsive, vital and colourful, the other demure, quiet and serious.

When he first spoke to Irene Brenner the intangible desire for romance, which all that year had been part of his waking hours, intensified until it dominated him wholly. There was in this girl an indefinable element of mystery—an impenetrable region which lies on the further side of silence. She possessed that residuum of personality which, no matter how deeply one might penetrate, remains unknown. It was this elusive and vague quality which appealed to the intractable desire in West. No longer was the thing he sought a mere abstraction. Here it was embodied in a girl whose fingers he might touch and whose lips he might kiss.

The night he had met her events shaped themselves so that he was thrown with her alone. After a day of confining labour he had answered the insistent call of the city. He sat alone drinking and smoking, letting his spirit drift on the surface of the feverish, chromatic life around him. From a curtained alcove opposite him came the nervous high-pitched laughter of merry-makers. He could see but two of them. One was Irene Brenner, the other a student he knew by sight. He caught the girl's eyes for a moment, and became keenly conscious of his isolation as he watched her talking gaily with some person invisible to him. Then presently a man stepped forth from the alcove and approached him. He was Albert Deming, a senior whose wealth had made him well-known in university life. West had met him once at the house of Professor Bainbridge.

"If you're all alone, West," Deming said unenthusiastically as he reached the other, "we'd be glad to have you join us."

Something in his manner made West hesitate. But the girl's eyes were on him, and she was smiling faintly. He rose and moved to the other table where a place was made for him amid a torrent of jocular comments and

extravagant greetings. He suffered no embarrassment, and responded pleasantly, for he felt older than any of those present. His felicity of manner and easy unconsciousness took them by surprise. Quickly their attitude changed, and they accepted him without further demonstration. For two hours there was a gay interchange of badinage which grew in volume and incoherence as the time passed. Wine was consumed steadily. Waiters were reprimanded with simulated anger for their lack of swiftness in filling the glasses. The flush of the girls' faces deepened, and eyes glittered unnaturally. Voices grew louder. Laughter rose shrilly. Men shouted hoarsely, sang snatches of popular songs, and drummed frantically on the table.

West drank heavily with the others. His head reeled exquisitely. He caught the spirit of the assembly, and a fatalistic gaiety seized him. Nothing mattered. His future was blotted out. He was at peace with all the world. A silken knee touched him under the table, and he burst into wild laughter at the thought of his old seriousness. He was constantly aware of the subtle appeal of Irene Brenner. Their eyes met often, and they smiled happily to each other. His tongue became fluent and he joked noisily. His instinct for play, for years dormant, burst forth in him. Not alone with wine was he drunk. His brain swayed with the intoxication of a new and undreamed-of life. During the past few months he had tasted the husk of this new life; he had lived its artificial counterpart, and he knew what was expected of him. He understood the temper of the evening. His sense of values held him at that point beyond which, had he ventured, he would have met resentment. But there were certain prerogatives which his manner and bearing allowed him. These he exercised; and when he spoke the others listened. Even in ribaldry his power for leadership asserted itself. Girls and men alike smiled at him admiringly. He had the gift of compelling speech, and

when he rose to offer a toast, his words came quickly and competently. His hilarity was contagious, and his personality dominated his listeners.

The hour grew late. Slowly the café became deserted. There was now pandemonium. Disorder and noise reigned. The front door had been closed, and they were alone. Red faces from the kitchen peered cautiously into the room. The attendants looked on smiling. The manager counted the night's proceeds and said nothing. Open love-making began. One girl ran round the table in mock fright. A swaying student followed and caught her. The others jeered and roared. Another student stumbled to the deserted orchestra stage and tried to play the piano. The sounds were discordant and unintelligible. He swore good-naturedly, and gave it up. A girl had her feet on the table, her dress above her knees. A man next to her, following out some illusive and tangled idea of gallantry, baptized her ankles in champagne, intoning Latin conjugations as he did it. The girl screamed and sent the dishes rattling with her feet. . . .

"Maudie's dead," shouted some one, and began to laugh hysterically.

Every one looked. The girl indicated lay with her head on the table, breathing heavily. The student at her side lifted the inert body and couched her head on his shoulder. Then he began singing "Rock-a-bye, baby, in the tree-top" in a hoarse, tuneless voice. Every one took it up. The unconscious girl aroused herself.

"I just dreamed——" she began.

Laughter and hooting drowned her voice.

One of the men snatched a great cluster of roses from the centre of the table and held them aloft.

"For the most beautiful girl present," he announced.

A cheer greeted his proposal.

"Who'll decide?" a voice asked.

"The invited guest—the stranger within our gates," answered another voice.

"Certainly! All right! West! West!" Every one seemed to shout his name.

The flowers were thrust into his hand. He counted the girls present, and divided the bouquet equally, letting some of the roses fall across his knees. Then he distributed them.

There was a wild cheer, punctuated by laughing accusations of cowardice. While they shouted, he gathered the roses he had let fall and passed them secretly to Irene Brenner.

Albert Deming, sitting next to West, saw the action, and became morose. For a while he drank in silence. Then he leaned across to the girl and whispered something in her ear. She turned on him angrily, and struck him in the face. There was a hush, and the man rose unsteadily. With a sneer at West he took his hat and coat and went reeling from the room.

A reaction, sudden and final, settled upon those who remained. Irene Brenner put her hand on West's arm.

"Let's get out of this," she said.

In a few minutes he and the girl were in a closed carriage. Neither spoke. His hand clasped hers on the seat between them. Suddenly the carriage turned into a deserted street. In a moment his arms were about her, and he was straining her body hard against his own. She did not resist him, and he could feel her quivering through him. His face was against hers, and he was kissing her rapidly, almost brutally, on the mouth. She moved her head upward that she might miss none of his kisses, and her arms went round his shoulders and clung to him. The boy was muttering something against her face—something she could not understand, but whose portent she sensed.

An hour later they stood in the dark hallway of a little apartment house not half a mile from the college. Again she was in his arms, almost breathless because of his savage embrace.

"I love you." He repeated the phrase over and over again. "From the first time I ever saw you I loved you. What would I have done if I hadn't found you to-night?"

"I sent for you," the girl said softly. "I wanted you." She struggled free from his arms. Then taking his hand she led him across the dark hallway and up the back stairs.

XI

Irene Brenner's nature was not one in which unselfishness played a part. By the older men of the University she was looked upon as one of that class of pleasure-loving girls who, in all college towns, congregate in the rich students' quarter, and who find what relish they seek in life in a round of entertainments where money is spent lavishly. Her beauty had made her popular. She was always confronted by a choice of invitations, and students competed with one another for her company. She knew this and had been sufficiently clever to maintain impartiality toward those with whom she appeared in public. Many students had been in love with her, but she had rejected them all with the solicitous good humour which an older woman might use toward the foibles of children.

In Stanford West, however, she found a personality radically different from those to which she had been accustomed. Despite his youth there was maturity in his demeanour. His solidity of character impelled her as no other student had been able to do. There was in him a reserve she could not penetrate, an authority she could not resist. His poise, his natural intensity, his silent, domineering manner, his hidden power—these things weakened her own stability and self-possession. She could govern and sway the natures of other students, but she was aware of her impotence in West's presence. When she went about with him her will was relaxed; she was content to put her dependence in him. With him she was never uneasy. She was not afraid, as she had been with other students, that some rash act of his might

lead to an unpleasant situation from which she would have to extricate herself. He was not immature as had been her other companions. He gained his ends quietly and good-naturedly through the sheer insistence of his personality. There was in his address a superiority, felt but not seen, which commanded respect. But withal there was a youthful spontaneity in his actions. He threw himself into the follies of life with the enthusiasm of a boy. His inherent solemnity never intruded on the gaiety of his nature. It was her first experience in feeling security. And Irene Brenner gave herself up to the fascination of this paradox from without, and while she chafed under the comparative meagreness of his income, she could not resist the influence of his personality.

Stanford West was twenty-two, although he appeared many years older. He was of medium height and well-built. His head, though not large, gave the effect of massiveness. His hair was dark, almost black, and grew well back from his forehead and temples. There was a suggestion of ruggedness in his face, despite the austere regularity of his features. Above his eyes were protruding forms which were accentuated by a slight permanent frown. His eyes, heavily lashed, had little warmth. They were grey and implacable, at times severe, and, because of their sheltered intensity, they held those who looked into them. His nose was too straight, too powerful perhaps for an artist, but its rigour was softened by a mouth whose sensitiveness suggested some deep-lying weakness. It was a mobile and refined mouth, and on occasions showed firmness. Generations had gone into its production—generations in which compromise and assertiveness had fought for dominance, neither having been fully victorious. His chin was oval but strong, capable of aggressiveness yet susceptible to influences. There was no hint of fulness about his face, but it represented power, and it possessed a beauty which was not alone Apollonian.

West dressed with care, almost with fastidiousness. He recognized the value of clothes and had inherited an autocratic penchant for distinctive dress. The appearance of his person strongly influenced his bearing, and he watched over his body with immaculate care. Irene Brenner regarded his careful dressing with pride. She was proud also of the distinctive way in which he always carried himself. He had the gift of adaptability, and because he was conscious of his own power, he could hold himself in hand even amid the most unfamiliar surroundings. This worldliness of manner had inspired the girl's confidence the first night she had seen him. And though he did not know it, his easy bearing and self-possession had won favour for himself in a company whose attitude had at first been hostile. The student body had not forgiven him for his satirical indifference, nor had his outburst of two years ago been blotted from their minds.

The tone of West's life had now changed. He had found in Irene Brenner that intractable romance which had tortured him since the early autumn. But now that he possessed it, all else was obliterated. His personal writings had been put away; no longer did they hold his interest. The instinct for creation had been supplanted by an instinct for the actual. The call of Irene Brenner's love was stronger than the call of his future. When he tried to work the vision of her would haunt him. The perfume of her body, the soft tenacity of her arms, and the wonder of her whispered words flooded his brain and drove him from his ambitions. Nervously he would put away his work and go to her, forgetting all, even his studies, for days at a time.

He became obsessed with her. Under all circumstances he was conscious of her presence. In the classroom his mind drifted from his surroundings into vivid visualizations of their hours together. When unable to be with her, he sat alone in a sort of voluptuous stupor, giving

free rein to his imagination. Certain impressions of her detached themselves from the moving sequence of their life together, as if, like a camera, his mind had registered now and then a static vision. These impressions passed continually before him, appearing suddenly and without warning. That world, both past and future, which existed outside the immediate influence of his infatuation became drab and indistinct.

When the memory of Alice Carlisle was forced upon him by her letters, he viewed his past with contempt. He was ashamed of his youth and the inexperience which led him to imagine he once loved her. Yet even now he was unable to tell her the truth: he shrank from the unpleasantness of such a confession. So he wrote her as he had always done, and she detected no change in him. He kept the semblance of that romance alive with mechanical precision. He regarded the whole affair objectively as something detached and apart from himself. Without permitting himself to weigh the consequences, he perpetuated the deception in the spirit of one performing a disagreeable but inevitable duty. The future was too nebulous, too distant to cause him apprehension. The spell of the present was too keen: he was hypnotized by the immediacy of life. He lived in the heaven of his youth, believing it eternal.

He began to lose interest in his studies. At first he had fought the inclination to shirk his work. He took his books to Irene Brenner's apartment. It had been her suggestion. She had told him he could study there;—would they not then be together? He bought a desk and put it by the large window in her drawing-room. The room was small and richly furnished. There was dark silk on the wall, and heavy velvet hangings at the doors and windows. The lighting was subdued, and before the fireplace were low, sprawling chairs. The woodwork and the walls were dark, and all about were jars, vases, scimitars and tabourettes breathing forth the atmosphere

of oriental luxury. The floor was deep with Persian rugs, and small scarfs and embroidered coverlets made spots of colour among the rich sombreness of the walls and draperies.

West felt the silent insistence of inaction which pervaded the room. Outside the world's strenuous trafficking, the great flux and reflux of human activity, went on unceasingly. Men came and went, fought and worked, imagining they were moulding their petty destinies. Breathlessly and feverishly the battle of aspiration waged. The far, muffled sound of it penetrated the sombre room, and West paused and listened. Where did they lead—those millions of cross-currents of human life, pushing and straining, each convinced of its destinate power? In the end they were all caught and buried beneath the great avalanche of the onrushing years. The grotesque futility of endeavour made him smile.

Out there beyond the naked trees a man hurried by, tense and silent, oblivious of all about him, driven by some desire, some ambition, some grotesque sense of his own importance. Overhead the sun looked down with a serenity which mocked the puny restlessness of earth. And beyond the sun, in the vastness of infinity, new worlds were being born. The sublime futility of human strife! The bitter humour of the hurrying man! Surely the gods were laughing at his antics! . . .

The boy at the window closed his book and turned to the quiet room. To him it was a sequestered retreat outside the gates of the world, where listlessness and meditation seemed saner than the meaningless moil of action. Before the fire sat the girl, her eyes half closed, her long slender hands hung motionless from the chair arms.

"You love your work more than you do me," she scolded quietly.

He seated himself at her feet and drew her arm about his neck.

"I love you more than anything in life," he replied.

"And yet," the girl persisted, "in ten minutes you will leave me alone, because you have a lecture."

He did not answer. He thought of the hurrying man in the street and of the laughing gods. Ten minutes passed.

"Don't go to-day, sweetheart," the girl pleaded. Her mouth moved about his face. The perfume of her! "Stay with me."

During the past month he had missed many classes. Here by the open fire he had lounged, outside the gates of the world. At first he had resented Irene Brenner's interference in his work. He had upbraided himself for his acquiescence. But now it had become a habit. What mattered a little learning?

. . . . .

In the evenings the city claimed him. That, too, had become a habit, and one which took strong hold of him. It grasped him like a drug, and led him night after night into the crowded glamour of café life. All day he looked forward to those hours with Irene Brenner in the midst of the ever-changing romance of the city's recreative hours. He was fascinated by the mystery of it—the clangour of the ghost-like traffic, the great dancing shafts of light athwart the streets, the sinister avenues of semi-darkness, the painted faces, the half-seen figures of young girls, the whispering couples, the curtained carriages with their hidden secrets, the overhead flames and the distorted shadows, the silhouettes on shaded windows, the snatches of indecipherable music, the whirlpool of human movement, the jangling of cars, the commingling of laughter and talk;—and by his side the unfathomable mystery of sex, the soft hands searching for his, the hair against his cheek, the low reiteration of love, the warm pressure of the girl's body.

It was different from being alone with her in her apartment. Then there was always the consciousness of each

other's isolated personality. There was too intimate and personal a communion between them. Their love was stripped of its illusion, and the silence called out for words. But in the movement and din of half-suggested reality they could cling together in silence, finding in the myriad phases of life about them the unmistakable symbols of their love. They read their own lives into every flitting romance. They saw themselves mirrored in every whispering couple which passed them. In the recesses of every hooded carriage it was they who clung close together. And every lone man or woman seeking through the crowds represented their own soul in the eternal quest of the other. In the late night, when they would turn again toward the silence and solitude of home, it was as if they had found each other again for the first time—as if they had discovered anew that subtle and wild intoxication of the first great conquest of each other's love.

Months went by—months filled with the inconsequential pleasures of spontaneous living. Stanford West's first qualms of conscience regarding his neglected work had now been dissipated by the joy which his new manner of living brought him. There was little time for unpleasant self-analysis. Every night found him at the theatres or cafés, sometimes alone with Irene Brenner, sometimes in company with others. In the mornings he slept late, and lingered over his breakfast and cigarettes. He was lazy during the forenoons, only occasionally finding sufficient courage to go forth into the cold and attend lectures. Even when he succeeded in answering the call of his work, he sat listlessly and disinterestedly through his classes. He rarely made notes, for, after the first few minutes, the instructor's voice became for him a meaningless drone—as meaningless as the drama of life itself. The ordeal over, he turned straightway to the secluded solitude of Irene Brenner's apartment. Sometimes winter sports called them forth—sleighing when

the snow was deep, skating when the rivers and ponds were frozen. At other times there were teas and dinners at the houses of friends; and always at night, there was the city.

Occasionally, during physical reactions, West turned his mind to his own writings. He now had time for desultory reading, and his old desire to create would ride in on the surface of his temporary depressions. Many of the things he had written he read to the girl. She praised them in conventional phrases, sometimes smiling at his earnestness. He could see they did not interest her. Her tastes were primitive. She laughed at the books he read, and once when he had taken her to a concert her uneasiness was so apparent that he did not venture it again. But he was not discouraged. His own interests at present were but the echoes of an earlier and distant existence.

One day there came a letter from his father which affected him deeply. News of the boy's indifference to his work had reached Joseph West, and the letter was a plea for a realization of the necessity of study. His words were not harsh. Joseph West loved his son too much to write with bitterness. The letter merely called attention to the other's failures, to the wasted hours, to the opportunities ignored, to the consequences of idleness, to the sacrifices which were being made for him, to the toll which life would some day take from the greatness which might be his.

The letter had its effect. Stanford West was downcast for days. He began to study again, but he experienced great difficulty in concentrating his mind. He had lost the instinct for work. His brain moved slowly; its plasticity seemed gone. But the memory of his father's words shamed him, and he forged ahead like an automaton. In the evenings, pleading a headache, he locked himself up with his books. But his labours proved futile. It took all his will-power to fight off the insistent

call of the city. There was little energy left to apply to his work. Irene Brenner did not understand this sudden change in him. It puzzled her, and she resented it.

One day she confronted him, openly accusing him of tiring of her. But she knew by the look in his eyes that her accusation was unjust. She changed her tone.

"You are all I have in the world," she began pleadingly, "and now you are drawing away from me. Does your work mean so much that you can leave me alone? . . . I'm so unhappy without you. And what does your work matter? . . . Haven't we been happy? Haven't *you* been happy? Are you going to let anything stand in the way of our love? . . . Come, dear . . . don't go away from me to-day. I'm too lonely."

West took her in his arms tenderly.

"Nothing matters but you," he said. "Only——"

She began to cry. The boy leaned down and kissed her tears away.

"Some day I may be great," he told her. "Then there'll be nothing I can't give you. Suppose for a while we have to give up something: what of the years ahead of us? . . . We are both so young."

"I can't wait for you," the girl sobbed. "I want you now—as you are—always with me."

"But what of the future?" he persisted, only half believing in it himself, as he felt her young body shaking against his.

"I don't know. . . . I don't care." There was petulance in her voice. "I only know what I want now."

"Wouldn't you want me to be great some day?" The boy was trying to recall Seminoff. He needed the influence of that personality to convince himself of his own possibilities.

"We couldn't be any happier than we are now, no matter how great you became," she answered, as one who argues against incredible things.

The idea of greatness had never presented itself to her.

It had no place in her scheme of life, and meant nothing to her. She had never conceived it as possible in those she knew. Greatness was a condition of that world in which she had no interest—the world of effort and responsibility, of serious thought and strenuous labour. She knew there must be such a world, but it was far removed from her own sphere, and she had no desire to enter it. Life to her meant only the reiteration of care-free hours, the constant recurrence of pleasure. All this she had attained in her life with West. He stood for that irresponsibility which was to her the breath of life. She found in his varying, superficial moods the atmosphere in which her nature thrived, as a flower thrives in the sunlight.

Now she was jealous of this new ambition which entered into their relationship. She resented its intrusion as she would have resented the intrusion of another woman. It became in her eyes a tangible thing standing between them and forcing them apart. It was not the actual greatness of West she feared: it was the idea of it that he believed in. She did not credit the possibility of his ultimate greatness, nor would she have recognized the unmistakable signs of it had they been exhibited to her. Greatness and intimacy could never exist simultaneously in her mind. Greatness lay somewhere beyond the confines of personal intercourse, in a world which for her would ever remain idealistic. She could not visualize West's transformation from a warm-hearted, gay youth to that awe-impelling and impenetrable figure which symbolized greatness. But even had she granted to herself the possibility of such a metamorphosis, she would have fought against it. She could not understand greatness: its enormity subdued her. She preferred the understandable, the encompassable. Therefore she combated West's belief in himself.

"I want you just as you are, dear," she repeated. "I

don't want anything in the world to take you away from me."

West endeavoured to compromise.

"It wouldn't mean for all the time," he returned gently. "Only a little of the time. We would be together a great deal."

Again she felt the presence of an intangible interloper that was competing with her love. A hot wave of jealousy ran through her. The emotion was new, and it troubled her. She had known jealousy before; only now she could not put her hand on the object of it, though she realized that it was as powerful as an animate thing.

"You love—something, more than you do me," was all she could say. She was frightened, for she felt the presence of a ghost.

The boy could not understand. Her supple hands were moving slowly up and down his back, pressing him here and there as they paused in their aimless search. She was crying bitterly, and her breast rose and fell against him. He stroked her hair, running his fingers through it gently. His hand fell to her neck and he pressed his palm to it.

The clock struck, and he glanced up. In five minutes he was due at a class. His thesis was written, and to-day he was to read it. His mark for the quarter would be based on it. If he shirked now, it meant a failure and disgrace in his father's eyes. The man's letter swam before him. Certain phrases in it, gentle and pregnant with love, repeated themselves in his brain. The hand of the little clock was moving. Firmly and tenderly he lifted the girl's arms from round him.

She knew that the ghost was taking him away. She wanted to cry out in a jealous rage, but she realized that her invisible rival could not hear. She was overcome with a sense of impotency. She watched West go to his desk and put a manuscript in his pocket. She stood mo-

tionless, inert, her eyes following him. He came toward her with outstretched arms.

"It won't be long," he said, and took her in his arms.

The length of time he would be away meant nothing to her. Were it only for five minutes it would mean her defeat. That mysterious, unseen antagonist was triumphing. That was all she could understand. Suddenly her arms were about him, and she was holding to him with all her strength.

"You can't go, dear . . . you can't go. Listen to me! . . . You musn't go!" She was crying hysterically. Her voice was broken with convulsive breathing. "If you go it means that I have lost you. You've got to stay with me now. . . . If you love me you won't leave me. I can't let you go. Don't you know—it would break my heart? If you go . . . you don't love me. Oh, dear heart, tell me—show me you love me." She ran on brokenly, repeating her entreaties, sobbing and choking on her rapid words. Then she drew West's head down and covered his face with wild kisses, babbling incoherently of her love.

The boy was nonplussed. He could not read the real fear behind her entreaties. Her manner frightened him, but her kisses went through him like fire. Her weakness filled him with a great tenderness.

Suddenly she fell on her knees, still clinging to him.

"You can't go! . . . Dear, you mustn't go." Her voice was almost a moan now. Her hysteria had exhausted her.

West looked at her, dazed. He had never before seen her like this, broken and humble. Something tightened at his throat. The girl's humility overpowered him. The shaking, crumpled body at his feet became something irresistibly pitiful, something infinitely sacred.

Bending over, he lifted her in his arms. Then he placed her in a low chair, and kneeling by her, drew down her head. His mouth was on her throat.

"You are everything in the world——"

But all words were empty now, meaningless and irrelevant. His lips moved across her throat, and their mouths met in a blind, stifling kiss. An intolerable flame enveloped him, burning his breath away. What was this strange piercing pain? Shuddering and afraid, he clutched the girl to him. Now he was all instinct: it was so powerful that nothing in the world could have taken him from her.

XII

Spring came and flourished into summer. The holidays were approaching, and Stanford West began to dread the meeting with his father. Except for the first few months his year had profited him little. He had been promoted only conditionally, and in his father's eyes it would spell failure. West knew the failure was his own fault. There was no extenuation to offer the silent man whose gentle eyes would reproach him tenderly. The boy knew he could never bring himself to give the reason for his failure. Yet he had a premonition Joseph West would guess his secret. That would heighten the agony of his shame. There would then be something between them, something they both understood, but which neither would mention. And that silent barrier would be less tolerable than an open breach.

As he forecast the summer a pang of anger stabbed him—anger at the world, at the irrational process of life. His conscience did not charge the girl with the disgrace which her love had brought upon him. It had not been her fault. He felt only tenderness at the thought of her. She was the weaker, and he need never have seen her after that first night. But he had wanted her. He had remained voluntarily. And he had gone back to her day after day, without being bidden. The blame was his. Had he not taken her in his arms and kissed her? And had he not assumed thereby a duty to feed the love he had kindled? The guilt lay within himself. His own desires and weaknesses had led him on and on into the path of waste and negligence and inaction. Of his own free will he had mortgaged his future for the sake of his

desires. Now he must pay, and he admitted the justice of the settlement.

But there was still another year before him. Things would be different then. It would be possible to recoup his losses, for he possessed an instinct and a facility for learning. It might mean hard work, but there was no other alternative. Other men had done it, and what other men could do, he could do. Perhaps this year of drifting had been for the best: at least, it had taught him much. He would rise from the sodden bed of this year, exalted and renewed. Already the fever of accomplishment was on him. He wished the autumn were not so far away.

June came. The electric excitement which charges a university's atmosphere at the close of the year vibrated through the student body. West, insulated by failure, was no part of it. He was an outsider, forgotten and ignored. But it took hold on him and set his pulses thumping. For the first time in eight months his spirit reacted to the turbulence of the world of action. Pennants waved. Bands of singing students walked swiftly by him. Lanterns beaded the campus. Men shouted to one another. Flowers and bunting appeared about the buildings. And over all was a joyful restlessness, a constant staccato of feet, a hubbub of gay voices, a rattling of carriages. It was all a celebration of triumph and achievement, of difficulties overcome. And because it meant this, it tortured West's soul. But there was no resignation in his heart. His blood flowed eagerly. Next year!

But that evening, beneath the kisses of Irene Brenner, the heyday of life was swept away. Below in the street he could hear the noisy students; but once again he was outside the gates of the world. His grief at thought of parting from the girl was greater than had been his ambition of the afternoon. But separation was inevitable. She was going south to spend the summer with relatives.

He had no choice but to return to Greenwood. They assured each other that the summer would pass quickly, that, when the autumn brought them together again, they would be all the more desirous of each other because of their privation.

West was the first to go. He had scarcely spoken that day. Several times he had attempted to say something, but all speech was a falsity. As he looked back from the rear platform of the moving train, he saw the girl clinging to the iron posts of the gate, her head hung forward on her breast. A sudden hot mist in his eyes blotted her from his sight, and in that moment he knew there was nothing in life more precious to him than the miracle of her body.

After a week at home—a week of brooding, of accusing silences, of strained silences, of unpleasant avoidances —there arrived a letter from Seminoff. He was free for the summer. He wanted to get away from the city. He was lonely, and he had thought much of his old friend. He thought they might be together until the University reopened—a walking tour perhaps, or maybe a camp in the Adirondacks. West had many reasons for eagerly grasping at the suggestion. He felt the need of Seminoff's practical personality. He wanted to ease his mind by escaping the silences of home life. He wished to shake the loneliness of Greenwood from his system. And finally he desired to avoid a farcical renewal of his relationship with Alice Carlisle who would return to Greenwood the following week.

In response to West's eager acceptance Seminoff joined him at Albany, and the two headed for the woods and lakes of Saratoga. Three days later, after a tiring search for a secluded camp, they rented a small tent on the green bank of an almost deserted estuary which poured into the upper end of Ballston Lake. Here, shut off from the world, they installed themselves. They were a mile from the nearest camp, two miles from the nearest store, but

their isolation suited them well. They were eager for each other's company and for the tasks they had planned together. Books had been brought, and Seminoff had insisted on West's taking his unfinished manuscripts. All about them was the density of trees. Opposite, across the narrow head of the lake, wooded heights, primeval and silent, stretched north and south. Rarely did a boat penetrate as far as their retreat.

Something in the solitude of these new surroundings revived in West his old desires. Here, isolated and apart, he could look upon his life impartially. He reviewed the events of the past year and was sickened with himself. He and Seminoff talked avidly for hours at a time, arguing and judging, praising and condemning. Once again the world of erudition, which had faded from West during the past months, came back with all its splendid appeal, its unsolved problems, its challenge and its hope, its sublime legacies of beauty and great deeds. It called to him as it had done once before, and he went to work with zest.

The poetic drama he had begun two years before had been brought forth. As he read the uncompleted fragment, an old familiar thrill passed through him. He wrote. At first the task was difficult. The engines of his brain seemed to have grown rusty through desuetude. But as the days went by, the immobility of thought and utterance vanished. He became conscious once more of his old fluidity. Again he caught the spirit of the ancient world. His mind became actively antagonistic to the dogmas of his day. He wrote on and on, bringing into living form the spirit of a dead and forgotten classicism. Each night he showed his friend what he had written; and together they talked of the genius of Greece, of that clean beauty of olden times, of the rich and lucid culture which once more was to be bodied forth in the pages of West's work.

Week followed week. West worked ardently, in-

tensely. The book grew. Seminoff encouraged him, looked after him, and in the evening waited on the bank of the river till physical fatigue would bring the other forth. West became conscious of his destiny. He regained his belief in himself, in his ideals, in the sublime mission of his life.

The summer passed quickly. Almost within a week of departure the drama was finished. West was overjoyed at its accomplishment. He was aware of the book's power. He knew that in a measure he had accomplished what he had set out to do. The battle against the tawdriness of modern literary thought had been won. He had done something new. He had made a distinct contribution to the letters of his time. He had clearly conceived his project and he had executed it competently. Perhaps it was not great: he did not hope for so much at present. But it was not in the beaten path. It breathed a new ideal. In a world of democratic compromises it voiced the culture of aristocracy: it possessed the divine power of individualism. He could not help but believe that its merit would be recognized and acclaimed. Surely the strength of its thought, the purity of its doctrine and the beauty of its theme would be felt and acknowledged.

After three days of rest West returned to Greenwood to make his final preparations for his last year at the University. His parting with Seminoff pained him. The loss of his friend, whose presence this summer had meant so much, left him with a feeling of vacancy, of insecurity. There was no one to whom he might turn, no one to whom he might unburden himself. Power seemed to leave him.

But the day after the parting there came a letter from Seminoff. "There are things I could not say to you this summer," it ran. "Forgive me for writing them now, but I feel I must say them. You had changed when I saw you in June. Something had gone from you. You had lost a bit of your old forcefulness, of the fine ardour

that inspirited you. Your eyes were not so sure; your mind was less keen. There was absent that splendid robustness of soul which once made my faith in you what it was. Perhaps I have guessed the reason for this spiritual deterioration. I don't know, nor do I ask you to tell me. But you have, for some cause, been untrue to yourself. For a year you have written nothing. When I learned of your sterility, it shocked me. Am I saying too much? Will you understand me? It is because I know what the future holds for you that I risk your friendship by writing thus. You have proved your vital worth this summer. You have accomplished a fine and vigorous feat. If you will, you can give a new impetus to the art of your day. The material is in you: you alone can turn your gifts to success or failure. The vision is yours. A benign fate has set you outside the cramping, insufficient thought that governs our modern literature with its puny ideals, its snivelling democracy, its specious sycophancy. And that same fate has equipped you with the power to actualize your vision. Perhaps there are other men who have dreamed of the resuscitation of Hellenic ideals and of the embodiment of genuine classic culture in our literature; and perhaps there are men whose creative faculties and technical skill are capable of bringing back to our art the great clear viewpoint of antiquity. But in you is the rare combination of vision and instinct and moulding capacity, which can make possible that renaissance in which we both believe. Your work of the summer has proved it. It is not final; we both know that: but it is the beginning. You are incredibly young to have done even as much as you have. Remember your possibilities. Remember, too, that you are fighting generations of cant and false ideals. The world will not thank you. It will endeavour to break you. The path is lonely, but it leads high. Let no one stand in your way. And, above all, do not forget

that women are the great conservatives, unconscious and unknowing. Make them your foes."

West read the letter with a feeling of mingled hope and guilt. Seminoff knew the truth of his wasted year, and the fact shamed him. Yet he was moved by the letter. It aroused him to the consciousness of his own prowess. It gave him back that faith in himself which he had begun to lose. He returned to the University contrite and audacious, filled with high resolve. Irene Brenner had not returned. Her uncle had died, and she had to remain for a time with her aunt. West, though he suffered from loneliness, welcomed the delay. Now he could carry out his plans for the year without the powerful opposition of the girl's presence. Despite his resolve, he did not wholly trust himself. He knew her power over him, and he admitted the possibility of his eventual subjugation to that power. He was glad to be spared for a time the ordeal of the test.

He made several copies of his drama. One he offered to a publisher. Others he sent with letters to two of the foremost figures in modern English literature. He admired both of these older men, and begged them for an opinion of his work. The publisher returned his manuscript with a formal note of rejection. Slightly discouraged, but buoyed up by Seminoff's letter, he tried another publisher. Then there came an answer from one of the men whose criticism he had asked. It was frankly encouraging.

"You have done a splendid thing," it began. "You have aimed high and you have far from failed. I feel a new breath in what you have written, and I congratulate you on what you say is your first effort—although I find it difficult to believe that such can be the case. I understand what you are striving for and the ideas you voice, while not in perfect accord with my thoughts and sympathies, are admirably conceived and set forth. I presume that you are very young; but this is to your

credit. Perhaps you overestimate the mediocrity of modern ideals, but that does not keep me from admiring your success in stating what you believe to be a pure culture. I am quite honest when I say that I look forward to seeing other things of yours. A man of your talent and courage is destined for something compelling and worth while. I wish you every success, and again offer you my sincerest congratulations."

West experienced a sensation of geninue pleasure at this recognition from so high a source. The man who wrote the words was not great, but his erudition and sincerity had placed him in the forefront of the literature of his country; and his criticism meant much. It was West's first taste of authoritative praise, and it strengthened his confidence. He waited eagerly now for the answer to his other letter. The second critic was a much older man. His days of productivity were over, but his influence still moulded the efforts of the younger generation. At length there came a note, short, unenthusiastic, even petulant; but there was praise in it, and understanding. It told West he had far to go, but that he was on the right path. "The germ is there—the vitalizing instinct. Time alone will show whether you have sufficient intellectual energy to carry your ideals to fulfilment."

West could have wished for no more. If time were all, he need have no fear. He faced the future with that interior serenity which once had been part of his personality.

Encouraged by these two appreciations, he decided to submit his drama to one of the University professors for whom he had always had respect. The irascible little man was unlike his fellows on the faculty board. To West he had always appeared, intellectually, very little of a professor. If any one in the University would appreciate what he had done, it would be this man. One

night West climbed the long stairs which led to the professor's room and knocked.

"Why should I be burdened with your efforts?" the man asked, in answer to West's request. He came barely to West's shoulders, and his tiny tapering body seemed too fragile to support his huge, bulging head.

"You are the only man in the University to whom I would care to show it, whose opinion I would wish to have. You and I are different from the rest." West looked into his sharp, brown eyes.

"Come in," the little man ordered kindly. He was conscious of some intellectual kinship between them, of some psychic understanding which words could not explain.

"You tried to reform the institution once, I believe," he began when they were seated. There was a faint smile on his lips.

West did not reply, and the little man added: "A thankless task. It can never be done."

"It wasn't the failure I minded," the young man put in. "It was the stupidity of the opposition. No one recognized the cleanliness of the ideal I set forth."

"There was one," corrected the other enigmatically. "But intelligence is lonely. Its altitudes are too rare for the many. The intellectual aristocrat must turn his back on the world. The valour of the great man makes it possible for him to endure what the common man would shrink from. Culture—that is, the things you once pleaded for—can never be the property of the masses. The instinct for culture is a need: and the masses need only the ugly, primitive and ephemeral things."

"That lesson I have learned well." West looked at the little man, and regretted he had never come here before. "You will understand how well I have learned it when you read my drama. I have tried to voice a new culture —uncontaminated by democratic considerations, one which must ever be beyond popular comprehension.

Perhaps some day the people may be made to serve the culture despite their inability to understand it; just as we all serve nature without comprehending her. That was the old classic ideal. There's no reason why it might not be revived."

"It might, provided there should be born a man with both the intelligence and the power." The little professor lighted a brown cigarette. "He must be sufficiently forceful and clear-sighted to influence others who have the creative talent. Goethe was the last great force in the struggle for intellectual nobility. But now other ideals are coming in; there is no one to-day to carry on the aristocratic tradition." He glanced at the clock, and arose. "Drop in Friday night at nine. I always have a little *causerie* then. In the meantime I'll read your drama."

West returned Friday. There were many of the older students present. As he entered, the voices ceased and the little professor arose from the fire and came forward with extended hand.

"Gentlemen," he said, addressing those present, "this is Mr. Stanford West, our guest of honour. I have had the pleasure this week of reading a most unusual composition from his pen. And some day, gentlemen, mark my words, his name will be one of honour and distinction in the world of letters."

Before West could answer him, he had reseated himself at the fire and was talking of other things.

XIII

The bleakness of November had desolated the world when Irene Brenner returned. For two months West had worked diligently. He had assumed a large amount of conditional work, and had set himself the task of regaining the ground lost the previous year. He had been too busy to be lonely; his spirits had been too high to permit of melancholy. He was again acquiring the habit of study, and his actions were animated by a steady strengthening ambition to bring his university work to a successful close. He had even welcomed the solitude which the absence of Irene Brenner had imposed on him, and began to distrust more and more her approaching arrival. But withal there was a strong conflict in his heart. He yearned for the girl, and experienced hours of distressing grief; yet he knew he was better off without her. And so strong was his new resolve that, had the decision been his, he would have continued their separation.

There was cowardice in his attitude: this he did not deny to himself. He feared the influence the girl exerted on him. He did not trust himself to solve the problem in the way which was best for him. Could he subordinate his desire to his ambitions? Could he resist the demands she would make upon his time? Could he escape those arms which would reach out each night from the city and endeavour to draw him to its heart? Could he forgo those quiet, luxurious hours which had already eaten so deep into his soul?

There had been times during these two months when that mellow, listless life had seemed entirely dissociated from his being, like something dead and buried which no longer had power to arouse a response in him. But there

had been other times when he could feel that sweet, sodden atmosphere waft through him and set his body vibrating. He experienced this last sensation when he read Irene Brenner's letter saying she was hurrying to him. His pulses leaped at her words. His mind reached out to envisage her. His resolve weakened; and his whole body burned with expectation. In that moment he knew that she would win, that his hopes would crumble at her touch, that her full lips would draw from him every vestige of the sublime power which had been his during the summer.

As soon as she had come he hastened to her, oblivious to all save the encircling temple of her arms. Hope of victory was abandoned in the wanton joy of being with her once more. For a week he made no effort to continue his work. He submerged himself in the ecstasies of his old care-free life, mesmerized by the sensuality, the colour, the rush, the beauty, the rapture of it. The days went swiftly; all effort and endeavour were forgot. Then suddenly his excesses brought on the lassitude of physical reaction. One morning, as he stood alone, looking out upon the desolate street, a change came over him. Before him lay the world, grey, cruel and implacable—a world old and terrible, like an unconquered warrior. West felt the silent challenge of it; and memories of his summer came back to him. There was a battle to be fought and won out there in the bleak eternal distances. Banners waved in his heart, and he could feel the blaring trumpets in his blood. He remembered the letter of Seminoff and the words of the little professor. Once more he was conscious of his destiny.

Dressing hurriedly, he took his note-book and went to a lecture. That afternoon he returned to his own room and worked till twilight. Then he returned to Irene Brenner.

She was in a sullen rage. "Why did you leave me the way you did?" she asked him. "Without a word!"

"I had my work to do," he answered quietly.

"Is it more important than I am?" Her tone was colder than West had ever heard it before. It made his position easier. He could withstand her opposition. It was her tenderness he feared.

"My work must be done," he answered in an even, steady tone. "This is my last year; if I fail now it means disgrace. Surely you can see that."

"I can only see," came the girl's angry retort, "that you put your work before me."

"That isn't so," the boy answered resentfully. "It's not a question of first or second. We will be together all the time, except when my work's to be done. I should think you would want me to succeed. I failed last year because I wanted you so much that I couldn't bear being away from you. But now you've got to help me, for this is my last chance."

"Help you?" The girl laughed ironically. "And what of me? Am I to wait here alone all day while you are at classes, and then at night sit with my arms folded while you're studying?"

Stanford West watched the girl narrowly: he had never seen her in this mood. A flush of anger crept over his body. The girl meant less to him at this moment than ever before. She had chosen to assume the rôle of an open antagonist, and it aroused his opposition. He did not fear her so long as she defied him. Only when she pleaded with him and wept did he become powerless. The girl before him was now his foe, just as the student body had once been his foe. At the thought all his dormant aggressiveness came to the surface.

"If you loved me," he said resolutely, "you wouldn't want to see me fail."

"What do such things matter?" She spoke with irritation and indifference.

West was finding it difficult to control himself.

"It matters a great deal. Some day you shall see.

Two of the greatest men living have told me I shall some day do great things."

The girl laughed scornfully.

"Why should you do great things?" she taunted him. "Are you so different—so superior to everyone else?" Her expression changed. "You're making excuses to be away from me. You're tired of me. Perhaps you've found someone else."

"That's a lie, and you know it!" West was struggling with a fierce resentment which her words had awakened. His anger grew. All tenderness for the girl disappeared. He regarded her critically, coldly. For the first time he saw clearly her shallowness and vanity, her overwhelming concern in her own interests. And yet the realization of her unworthiness did not affect his infatuation for her. The appeal of her beauty was as powerful as ever. This fact increased his resentment; it made her more truly his enemy. He almost hated her for the very reason that she meant so much to him. It was a new emotion, and because he could not understand it, his bitterness became almost unbearable. He felt that he was in the presence of a terrible and mysterious danger, whose very unfamiliarity gave it a sinister aspect.

She laughed harshly again.

"After all, what could I expect?" she asked with mock resignation. "You're like all the rest. You've got what you wanted. Now suddenly, when you're tired, you remember your work; you think of your future. Do you imagine that deceives me?" She rose and went to the mirror, where she began to arrange her hair. "Why don't you tell me the truth . . . say you've had enough? Haven't you the courage? . . . Why this flimsy compromise—this beating round the bush? . . . It doesn't impress me, and it doesn't deceive me. I see through the cowardice of it."

Her taunting voice stabbed West like a knife. All his emotions coalesced and resolved themselves into a single

overwhelming unit of anger. The injustice of her words infuriated him till he regarded her no longer merely as a girl, but as a towering oppositional force, a powerful dominating enemy. She was all women combined in one. For the moment his love for her disappeared beneath the hot, driving torment of his fury. As he watched her standing before the mirror, he could not associate her with the girl he loved, though physically she was the embodiment of that girl. This scoffing, unreasonable creature was totally alienated from his affection—a stranger who stood between him and his desire. He had only an insensate disgust for her. He rose firmly, his fingers tightened over the arms of his chair.

"You think I wouldn't have the courage to tell you if I was tired of you?" Something in his tone made the girl turn sharply. "I'd drop you like that"—he snapped his fingers. "You could be damned for all of me. Why should I bother with you if I didn't care? Would it matter what you thought? You could take your ideas and go to hell with them. My life is more important than your comfort of mind. If I hadn't loved you, you wouldn't have seen me again. You've given me nothing I haven't given you. Why should I attempt to appease you? Do you think I'm impressed by the old superstition that men are to blame and women are always the losers? You attach too much importance to yourself. I came back to you because I still love you—as much as I ever did——"

The girl interrupted.

"Love?" she echoed. "You think you love me? You've never loved me. You've simply made use of my love when it suited your convenience. Then you tell me I've been the cause of your failure. Did you have to fail on my account? Did I lock you up and keep you from your work? Why blame me for your weakness?"

"You have the coldness to throw that in my face?" The shallow indifference of her attitude brought a hot

flush of new anger to his cheeks. His eyes burned, and the muscles in his arms and hands became rigid. Now for the first time he sensed her entire lack of sympathy in his affairs. He had been used for her own ends: his desire had been the power by which she had held him in her service. Still he loved her, blindly and irrevocably. Shame mixed with his anger and stifled him.

"Why not?" The girl's colourless voice brought him back to the present. "You could always go when you chose—just as you did to-day. I don't blame you. It's my own fault. Why should I expect you to hold my love sacred—to respect me after what I've done for you? You're all alike—rotten to the core. Even now you've probably got another mistress waiting for you——"

West stepped up to her, trembling, his breath coming quick and noisily. "Shut your mouth!" he ordered threateningly. As he spoke his nerves steadied: his trembling ceased. He was no longer afraid. Something had snapped inside him, and a great volume of domineering power burst forth and flooded his being, as water rushes through a collapsed dam.

The girl halted abruptly, as if the sudden change in him had been a visible thing. Her words gave way to a sneering smile, and she looked defiantly into his narrowed eyes.

"Take that smile off your face!" A new note of command, steady and resonant, was in West's voice.

Her instinct was to obey him, but that would have been defeat. Instead she stepped back and gave a derisive laugh. At the sound of it, something reeled in West's brain: a red fog passed into his eyes. His hand swept forth in a terrific blow, and the girl, one cheek burning, staggered and fell against the table.

"The next time I tell you——" he began.

But the girl had turned on him savagely, striking out with both arms. Again he struck her, this time with the palm of his hand. She cried out, half in anger, half

in pain. Then quickly she seized a small bronze vase from the table. But West was upon her, raining blows on her with both hands—hard, stinging blows which snapped and crackled like distant fire-works. She clutched his sleeve and impeded him for a moment. But he caught hold of her long dark hair which was now falling about her shoulders, and twisted it till her head bent back and her grip relaxed. She uttered a piercing cry, but it only intensified the boy's violence. When his arm was free once more, he again struck her savagely with his fist. He was laughing now, loudly and hysterically. The girl had ceased to resist. She stood cowering, with arms locked before her eyes, making a low, whimpering sound like a sick animal. Then she collapsed beneath one of his blows and fell to the floor, sending the table and lamp crashing behind her. There she lay sobbing, dishevelled and beaten.

West sank to a chair, his head in his hands. His anger was spent. A great weakness settled on him. He sat for some minutes, oblivious to time, to the noises in the street, to the sobbing girl at his side. Then he became conscious of a movement near him, of tentative hands on his knees. He felt warm, soft fingers on his arm and in his hair. A broken voice whispered "Dearest" in his ear, and there was the caress of loosened hair against his cheek. With a cry he caught the kneeling girl in his arms.

XIV

For a week West exerted no effort to return to his work. Neither he nor Irene Brenner mentioned the quarrel, but since the episode their relationship had undergone a subtle and radical change. The girl was humbler than before. She made no demands on him; she fell in with all his plans; she gave way to all his judgments; she was solicitous of him and waited upon him. And yet, despite the girl's subservience, West felt a new and unreasoning obligation to protect her. A strong invisible tie bound him to her. He was more tender toward her; and now it was of his own volition that he sacrificed his work to her happiness. To all appearances the victory had been his. He had subdued her by his will; he had dominated her by his physical superiority. And she had bent submissively beneath that dominance, her whole attitude indicative of defeat. Actually, however, the victory was hers, for he now gave her, without coercion, the very thing she had tried to take from him. So completely had he forced his will upon her that he might have followed any inclination he chose, knowing she would acquiesce to his decision. He could have gone from her for days, and she would have awaited him in submissive contentment. But he did not go.

There came a day when the shame of his weakness overpowered him. He drew himself up resolutely and faced the duties he had neglected. But he had waited too long to assert the power he had gained over the girl. Its efficacy had been spent through his dalliance, and she had already recognized the submerged weakness which ate away at the core of his strength. Having dis-

covered his vulnerability, she began to mistrust the power of his will. When at last he asserted himself she opposed him and forced her demands upon him.

This time West ignored her entreaties and accusations. He set his eyes resolutely toward his own future. For a fortnight he did not see her. During that time he applied himself determinedly to his studies, but he accomplished little. His mind was not at ease. He was tortured by visions of the girl, and could not overcome his intense yearning for her. He had gone from her threatening not to return unless she sent for him and agreed to the compromise he had proposed. For two weeks he had carried out his threat. But his mental sufferings were such that he could not work. His mind refused to concentrate on the tasks to hand, and he could not revive his interest in his work. His drama was returned to him for the fourth time, but he did not even suffer disappointment at its rejection. It meant little to him now in comparison with his hunger for Irene Brenner. He put the manuscript away, not troubling to send it out again. He brooded and became melancholy.

Then one day, when his suffering had brought him almost to the brink of morbid imaginings, a note came asking him to come back. She, too, had suffered from the separation, and again she humbled herself before him. In the joy of being with her he again lost sight of his future. Weeks passed before he put into practice the compromise he had demanded. The girl submitted to the arrangement quietly and sorrowfully. She was to see him only two afternoons a week; and only on Friday nights were they to visit the city.

The Christmas holidays came and went quickly. West did not return home. He availed himself of the respite to make up lost work. For two months after that the routine which he had outlined was adhered to. He was still behind in his studies, but there were over three months before he would be put to the determining test,

and he was not apprehensive as to the outcome. He worked doggedly and persistently. He slept little and took no recreation. But, with all his efforts, his task went slowly. There was now no incentive, and the thought of the girl, and the consciousness of her propinquity, distracted him. Then in the early spring West experienced a new torture. For the first time in his life he underwent the horrors of jealousy. When he went to Irene Brenner on one of those afternoons they spent together, he encountered Albert Deming descending the narrow stairway. The two men paused a moment, looked at each other, and then passed on without a word. But in that moment it seemed to West that a hand of ice and fire stifled the motion of his heart. His spirit went sick. When he was alone with the girl there followed a terrible scene. She began by being defiant. Then she made excuses because of West's neglect of her. At last, frightened by the look in his eyes, she became contrite and begged for forgiveness. West listened without a word, blinded by a novel and frightful passion. He tried to free himself from the tyranny of his emotion, but the pain of it had seared him too deeply. Scarcely before he knew what he was doing, he struck her viciously.

She accepted her punishment without protest. Again outwardly he was the victor: in reality, she mastered him by her abjectness. His work was again set aside voluntarily. Again he paid the price of his brutality by heaping her with tender attentions. At length he returned to his studies.

But now a new note had entered into the pain of separation. He began to wonder about Albert Deming. Would she see the man again? Might he not be with her at this moment? Deming had known her before. Did he love her? West recalled the first night he had given her the flowers; Deming had resented the action and had gone away in anger. Surely this man cared for

her. Perhaps she had once cared for Deming. West speculated and suffered keenly. Often when the pain of his uncertainty became too great, he put down his work and went to her. Thus he gradually neglected his studies. The old routine was forgotten; he was with her often.

Spring came once again. West was drifting to disaster. He knew it and was frightened. At night he would awake with something heavy weighing down his mind. He would stare into the darkness, stunned by the realization of the swiftly approaching days of graduation. He would try to put the aching worry from his mind, but when he fell asleep again it was to dream of swimming against a baffling tide. Despite all his strength, he could not breast the hurrying waves which came toward him in rapid succession. Sometimes he would dream of trying to run against a powerful wind: no matter how he struggled with its unseen force he was carried back, back away from his objective point. During his waking hours he refused to think of the future. It created a panic in his soul, and depressed him for days. He was not resigned. He fought, though ineffectually, against the fate which was sweeping toward him. And because it was weakness and not resignation which was to bring him to disaster, his suffering and shame were intense.

Another fact added to his humiliation. For the past two years he had secretly drawn on the small inheritance left him by his grandmother. The money had been placed in bonds, but when he became of age he had realized on them and opened a bank account in the city. His father knew nothing of the transaction, but the time was drawing near when the fact would be discovered. Had he won honours at the University, his extravagance might have been forgiven. Now there was no palliation for his waste. He was angry with the girl for the part she had played in his extravagances. It was for her he had

appropriated this money; and she had encouraged him in it.

But his anger did not decrease his love for her, nor relax the influence she exerted over him. Even now he was on the point of ceasing resistance. He knew he would be happier if he resigned himself to his desires for her. But during that moment of hesitation he received a note from the Dean. Though West knew what was in it, he shrank from opening it, as a condemned man might shrink from the gallows. Yet, when he overcame his dread and read it, something in him awakened. The letter was a final warning. It told West he could not graduate unless he made a superhuman effort from that moment on. Even then there was no surety of success: the note merely indicated that there might be one last hope of reprieve. The next day came a letter from his father and also a note from Seminoff.

Stanford West shook himself together for one final stand. There was little time left. Were he to win his degree he must give up Irene Brenner, entirely, without compromise. There would not be a single afternoon or evening she might claim. They must wait for each other till the holidays. Would she agree to that? Could he endure the separation? He walked for miles alone about the darkening streets, fighting with his instincts, keying himself up to a final plunge. Great banks of clouds, tinged with bleak colours of an early, half-hidden sunset, plunged across the twilight skies before a cold, swift wind. All about was the odour of early spring. The April buds glistened yellow-green about the flickering gas lamps of the street. The ground was wet from recent rain, and the pungent aroma of loam mixed with the over-sweet scent of lilacs and honeysuckle. As West walked briskly in the lively, mellow air, the whole world seemed to have emerged once more from a long sleep to a new and finer cycle of life.

Suddenly he turned his steps toward Irene Brenner's

apartment. The grey night had fallen an hour since, and the girl was waiting anxiously. On his entering she turned and was about to speak. But something in the man's face checked her.

West sat down in silence and lighted a cigarette with the deliberation of one under a strain. Then he began to speak, and his voice was cold and determined. The girl listened morosely, without change of expression. She knew it was useless to argue with him, for she realized he had reached a final decision. She accepted his pronouncement with passive stolidity. West did not trust himself to look at her as he talked, but gazed steadily into the low fire.

"It will mean," he said in conclusion, "that we shall not see each other until June, except for an occasional hour now and then. . . . I want you to know that I love you, and that what I'm doing is the best—for us. This separation will be as hard on me as it will on you. . . . I want you to remember that. But it's a choice of our being separated for a few weeks or the disgrace of failure."

He had expected some remonstrance, but the girl was silent. She looked straight before her with the air of one who has foreseen a catastrophe and is prepared to accept it complacently.

When she spoke her tone was resigned.

"I had hoped," she said, "that you would not leave me just now. I knew that as long as you were with me I . . . would do nothing I'd be sorry for. But since you've decided as you have, I suppose there's nothing to be done."

West was puzzled by her words, but he did not question her. Now that he had made his decision, he was anxious to get away. He was distrustful of his own security. He was glad she showed no signs of emotion. His departure was made easier.

Early the next morning he called on the Dean. Then

he went to work methodically, mapping out his hours of study, making notes on the calendar, arranging the many details of his duties.

For nearly two months he worked diligently, adhering to his resolve with a pertinacity such as only a strong nature can exert. The memory of his former weakness acted on him like a stimulant. His weakness had not been due to any absence of inherent power. Had his passions and emotions been less virile, he could have withstood influences from without. The very force of his nature, which had made it possible for him to resist the student body, became too often the weapon which defeated his own desires. This very force, translated into love, had in Irene Brenner's case turned upon himself; and because of its depth and power he had succumbed to it. But now that he had conquered that passion, his strength had returned. Once again he was master of his soul. He knew that he would see the girl no more until June, except for half-hours now and then. He was secure in his own determination. He did not fear for himself. No human power could have broken his resolve.

But he had failed to count on the vitality of memory. And it was this which in the end defeated him. He worked diligently, at times feverishly. His face became drawn and the muscles twitched at the corners of his eyes, now sunken and shadowed. But his tasks were not completed according to his plans. He fell behind his routine, and by no effort could he overtake the flying hours. Memories, speculations and doubts gnawed at his brain. He could not rid himself of them. They insinuated themselves into all his problems. They flashed out across the pages before him. They wrenched his thoughts from his work. Even when he had driven them away temporarily, the consciousness of them remained. Irene Brenner's attitude, during the few brief moments he was now with her, did not help him. He thought he

detected a change in her. He imagined she was indifferent, that she was slipping away from him. When he left her he was assailed by doubts and intangible fears. His instinct told him something was wrong.

As the end of the college year approached and he viewed the mass of work which remained undone, he realized that he was being defeated by the girl as surely as if he had remained with her. The last days went swiftly. The end was at hand, and he had not finished. For ten days he had not spared himself time to visit her even for a few minutes. He tried to comfort himself by looking forward to the summer when they would be together. He went into his final examinations with the thin hope that he might succeed. But when he glanced down the printed page, he gave in to his fate. Each day it was the same. He did not even make an effort. Then, when all was over, he walked slowly to Irene Brenner's apartment. The laughter of students and the clean sunshine seemed to mock him. When he arrived he saw that the curtains of the apartment were drawn. The door was locked. No one answered his long ring. He turned away, stricken with a sense of disaster. That night he found a note awaiting at his room.

"Dear," it ran, "the thing I have so long been afraid I would do, is done. I have married Albert Deming. You remember I told you that so long as you were with me I'd do nothing I might be sorry for. That was why I wanted you to stay with me. You didn't understand, and I couldn't tell you. I have known Albert a long, long time, and he has loved me nearly three years. I was on the point of promising to marry him when I met you. Then I knew I didn't love him, for you were everything in the world to me. And I love you now—perhaps I shall always love you. Last night I cried for hours on your account. It was foolish, for we shall never see each other again, but I couldn't help it. You see now why I

wanted you with me always. I was afraid of being alone. At first I fought hard against my loneliness, and when Albert came I wouldn't see him. But I grew frantic sitting there day after day and night after night, with nothing to do and no one to talk to. I couldn't stand it. My life had always been so gay, so full of people and pleasures and things to do. Oh, try to understand. That was all I lived for; that's all that life seemed to mean to me. I was depressed and unhappy after you went back to your work; and finally when Albert wanted me to go with him to the city and offered to give me everything I wanted—well, I went. I couldn't help it. That kind of life had a stronger hold on me than you had. After all it may be for the best. I am loved and I have everything that money can buy, and I am no longer lonely.

"Forgive me, dear, for what I have done. I am not as happy as I was with you, and I shall think of you often. Sometimes I shall cry a little for your sake. Will you ever think of me and our wonderful days together?

"IRENE."

West sat for an hour, dazed, amid the wreckage of his youth. Life seemed suddenly overwhelmingly cruel, and as he thought of the past two years, the iron entered into his soul. But in that instant his manhood awoke. The world had defeated him, but out of that defeat arose a new energy. The past receded from him. When he looked up, the blackness of night was in the room. Outside a group of students sang boisterously, and to West their singing was the echo of a long-forgotten existence. He lighted the lamp, and at the flash of it, resentment and anger tore through him. He had wasted two years of his life. His inheritance was gone. He was disgraced. And she for whom he must now suffer shame, had deserted him. As he contemplated the *débâcle* of his hopes, he felt a sudden blinding hate for the girl. She alone had

broken the pillars of his life and brought the ruins crashing down about him.

For a while he watched the gaunt shadows along the walls. Then his anger went as quickly as it had come. He still desired Irene Brenner. Now that she had passed from out his life, he realized that she still meant something to him—something which he believed time could not efface. It was she who had awakened his first great emotions. She was his knowledge, his point of view, the vitalization of all his youthful dreams. She had given him his first sweet drink of life. She had interwoven herself into the first hot stirrings of his blood. It was her body which had kindled the primeval fires in his soul. The wonder of her had passed into his veins. She was the whole of his youth, the eternal conquest of his life, elemental and immutable. Would she not forever remain the background of all his early memories?

Walking to the window he looked out into the blue night. All was still now. A few distant lights splashed the deep gloom, and several rectangles of dim yellow glowed on the shadowy houses opposite. Above them the tops of great silent trees lay black against a sky of white stars. Over all hung an atmosphere of brooding romance. The night was not cold, yet the sense of something chill made West shiver a little. His spring, which he had thought perpetual, had passed from him for all time. His mind looked back upon it—the glamour and the glory of it! The wonder and the joy! And then, in the midst of his blinding shame and tragic grief, he smiled faintly; for he knew that had the past two years been his to relive, he would not have had them different.

XV

Stanford West's parents bore his failure in silence. When he told them of it, briefly and without apology, they saw his remorse and sorrow. No words of theirs could have heaped higher his burden of shame. There was about him a wistful silence and a tender resignation, symptomatic of deep humiliation. They understood his grief and said nothing. To them he appeared years older than he had the previous summer. The lines in his forehead had deepened; his eyes had grown calmer and more penetrating; and his mouth was firmer. He bore himself with greater dignity. When he spoke it was with the intensity of one who had undergone a transforming tragedy. His nature had deepened; his personality had taken on a more sombre colour. Joseph West and his wife, seeing these things, were wise enough to know that the experiences through which he had gone had stirred the fundamental springs of his being. The matter was not one in which they might interfere.

Stanford West was grateful for their silence. He had awakened to a new knowledge: the world had suddenly been stripped of all illusion. He was now confronted by the necessity of transvaluing all things which touched his life. In the process he discovered that he possessed new forces and new potentialities. At first it was difficult to adjust himself to these novel psychological conditions; but before the summer was gone he had accepted the challenge of the grimmer order of existence with serene surety. He could use his full resistance to cope with it, for Alice Carlisle was abroad with her father, and he was spared the unpleasantness of an awkward

and hypocritical intrigue. Many times during the past year he had determined to break his engagement with her. But since Irene Brenner's desertion of him, his sentimental uncertainty had returned. He feared taking a decisive step. He must wait until order evolved from the chaos of his emotions.

Again his thoughts turned to his future; and again he found consolation in the thought of difficult creative work. He re-read his drama, together with Seminoff's letter and those of the two older critics. Inspired by new courage, he once more sent his manuscript to a publisher. He planned another work similar to it. Hotly urged by inspiration, he began to write. This labour gave him the consolation his mind most needed.

Toward the end of summer his father came to him.

"I want you to return to the University," Joseph West said. "I want you to finish your work with honour. Pretend it's your fourth year. We'll forget all the past. You're young: perhaps the last year won't mean so much to you. I want you to succeed."

Stanford West went again to Cambridge. There was no shirking now. He studied faithfully. His calendar was full. Irene Brenner was no longer there; and he allowed nothing to distract him. The University held many sad associations, but there was little time for retrospect. He avoided the scenes of his earlier follies.

His drama had been refused by four more publishers. Each of the rejections was an occasion of melancholy. A feeling of intellectual solitude depressed him. He was used to social solitude, but this new loneliness he found more difficult to face. Only the happiness in the depths of his being fortified him against his isolation. But finally a publisher in Boston sent for him and offered to issue the book provided he would share the cost of publication. West had but a limited amount of money with which to meet the year's expenses; but already he had saved a little, and he knew that by strict economy he

could save more. He agreed to the publisher's terms; and the book went to press.

For a while the thought of its appearance in print frightened him. The drama was too unusual, too revolutionary, too strongly opposed to the ingrained ideals and beliefs of his day. He was apprehensive as to the result of his heresy. He feared the scoffs and denunciations it might call forth. Perhaps its Hellenic sentiment was too aggressive, its unmorality too pronounced. Were the execution of the book more mature, he thought, his ideas would appear more authoritative and less positive. He knew the play had vigour, but he knew also it was an anxious vigour, more sure of itself than of its application. This was because he had served no apprenticeship with smaller things, but had plunged straightway into vaster issues. He was conscious of the shortcomings and the blunders of youth embodied in its pages. He had not acquired that strength and mastery for which he sought. The world might laugh at him:—this fear gripped him more strongly than any other. However, it was too late to turn back. He awaited anxiously the outcome of his first venture into authorship.

The day came when the book was placed in his hand. It emboldened him. It was a precious thing, a part of himself, and he was ready to fight for it. He loved it almost as if it had been animate. And because it was the expression of the most intimate things in his nature, he felt called upon to defend and protect it with all his strength. His spirit of combat flared up. His fears and misgivings vanished.

But his strength was not to be called upon. Copies had been sent to the critics. Few of them read it. By the majority it was ignored. One or two wrote him personal letters of appreciation, saying they dared not praise it publicly. A small number printed perfunctory notices. One or two treated it lightly. No one took it seriously.

The very few who undertook to criticize it were blind to its import.

"All young men during their university days," wrote one, "compose Greek dramas. They take the legends and the myths of the ancients, alter them to the needs of their plots, and couch the result in time-honoured iambic pentameter. Mr. Stanford West appears to be no better and, let it be said, no worse than his predecessors in this juvenile and questionable practice."

"The desire to shock and startle," commented another, "is an infallible concomitant of the inexperienced. It is only the very young who have the effrontery to advocate the abolition of moral laws. Mr. West is no doubt very young, for the temerity he displays in his admiration for the license of antiquity would be impossible in a man of mature years. Nor does this play contain any technical merits which might be urged in justification of its theme."

West was grieved at this meretricious style of judgment. He had hoped that at least his point of view would be understood. Condemnation would not have mattered so much then. But no critic had recognized the youth of it, its pagan soul, the Grecian love of beauty, its spirit of solemnity and theistic awe, its passionate reverence for the older and cleaner gods. They saw only an attempt to shock. And all his strivings for the technical simplicity of Sophocles, for the ingenuousness of the *Œdipus* manner, for the psychological spirit of cumulative cohesion as opposed to the mechanical and artificial dexterity of modern art—this, in the critics' eves, spelled crudity and ineptitude.

West's grief at this lack of appreciation was deepened by the fact that his father, too, had been distressed by the book's publication. He had not shown the manuscript to his parents because of the barrier which had lain between them. But when the book appeared, he had sent them a copy, hoping its beauties might reconcile them

to his two years' waywardness. He threw himself once more into his studies until he had successfully completed them. In time he brought home an honourable record of academic labour.

The summer after his graduation was a trying one. His first act was to break his engagement with Alice Carlisle. The tragic comedy of their love had grown too painful for him. His position had become invidious, even to culpability, and his conscience gave him no peace. He went to her, and was honest.

"It has all been a terrible mistake," he told her. "Once I thought—I believed I loved you. I don't understand the change in me. Only, now that I'm older, I realize that I don't love you as much as you would want me to if I should marry you. . . . Try to forgive me."

The girl looked at him questioningly, but with no sign of emotion.

He thought he read her mind and went on: "There's no one else I love—or I'd understand why I'd changed. I only know that I'm different now, like another person . . . and all my emotions are different."

He could not continue: he was suffering too deeply. The girl saw his pain and tried to console him.

"I know you can't help it, Stanford," she said in a soothing voice. "I wouldn't want you to pretend to care for me—that would be worse. I'm . . . glad you had the courage to tell me. It was the strong and right thing to do. . . . Maybe some day you'll find a girl you'll really love."

Her attitude puzzled him. It made him doubt his own sincerity in repudiating his love. When he had left her he remembered the wistfulness in her eyes which seemed to belie the coldness of her words; and he tried to put it from him.

That night he told his father of his decision. The older man said nothing, but West knew that his act had

only added to the burden of sorrow which the other already bore on his account.

His future was now at hand. He knew that Joseph West counted on his entering the State College in preparation for his prescribed career. He himself was in no position to dictate. He owed a great debt to his father. The past arose before him like an insuperable wall. He did not broach the subject, but waited for his father to speak. He was prepared to protest mildly, but he knew his sense of duty would keep him from any refractory outburst. There was a chance that Joseph West would consent to the career he wished to follow. If so, he would set his hand to the difficult game of authorship. If not, he would enter the great brick college on Oak Hill and do what writing he could when the opportunity offered. It might be that later some destinate upheaval would liberate him. Again, he might find strength to throw off the yoke with his own hands. Of one thing he was sure:—his submission would never be permanent. But at present he had neither the heart nor the courage to resist.

When, toward the end of the summer, his mother came to him and asked him if he had definite plans for his career, he merely stated his desire to continue his writing.

"I had hoped," she said sorrowfully, "that your wishes would be ours. It will break your father's heart if you don't follow him in the work he has planned for you . . . and I shall feel that in some way you've been lost to me."

West said nothing, and the woman continued: "You are all we have in the world, and we have no hopes other than those which are centred in you. Already you've caused us a great deal of heartache. You've drifted from us and all our teachings. You've gone your own way and brought bitter disappointment to us both. You've thrown a year of your life away. You've squandered your inheritance. You've broken with the girl who loves you and to whom we wanted to see you happily married.

You've scoffed at our most sacred ideals and ridiculed the faith your father and I have always lived by. You'll never know what pain your book caused us. It shows how far you've drifted away from all that is upright and good. It is the book of an atheist, a man without belief in God. It upholds everything that's selfish and uncharitable and vicious. I can hardly believe that a child of mine could have written those words. I don't understand why God should visit such punishment on me. I don't bring these things up for the purpose of censuring you. I only want you to realize what you, our only son, have made us suffer. I can't believe you really think these things . . . and I pray that some day the good in you will come forth. For the good is there; if I didn't believe that, I think I should die. If your ideas were different I shouldn't look upon a career of writing as so terrible a thing. I could even be happy in it, in spite of my sorrow and disappointment at your unwillingness to do what we had chosen for you. But when I think of you expending your fine talents upon such abhorrent and immoral writings as your book it seems more than I can bear. I believe after you've been here for a while with your father and me, things will be different."

The woman turned and looked anxiously, almost fearfully, at the silent figure of her son. Impulsively she leaned toward him.

"Can't you be content to do what we wish?" she asked brokenly. "Can't you see that it's the best thing for you? It doesn't seem that I could stand any more sorrow on your account . . . and your father is all broken with worrying about you. . . . Come back to us, son!"

There was anguish in her voice—such anguish as can grow only out of a long and consuming love. So strong was her passion that tears forced themselves into her staring eyes and fell unheeded on her tightly folded hands.

West was strangely affected by her tears. He remembered how Irene Brenner had pleaded with him in just

the way his mother was now pleading. And as he made that unconscious comparison there suddenly fell from this woman before him all the illusion of motherhood. She, no less than Irene Brenner, was concerned with her own interests. It was for her sake she wanted him to remain in Greenwood, perhaps merely for the gratification of her vanity. And to achieve her end she made use of the same weapons that the girl at the University had used. Yet, although he believed this, he could not combat those soft persuasions, those pronouncements of love, those appeals to his chivalry, and finally those tears.

The following month he entered his father's college.

Six months later he wrote to Seminoff: "Dear friend: Life has woven a pretty net about me. Here I am studying night and day in order to become an adept in the art of pedagogy. It was my father's wish, and there were many reasons why I could not go against it. He hopes that some day I shall take his place at the head of the college. Who knows? Perhaps I shall. My soul rebelled at first, but by dint of practising a ruthless negation upon all my aspirations I have almost come to accept my lot with a deep contentment. Even if there is no exaltation in it, there is at least beneficence. I feel myself being drawn down into the welter of pedantry and dogmatism by a vindictive and punitive fate whose power I haven't the energy to overcome. Perhaps it is just as well, for in a world of compromise and convention the uncompromising and unconventional must inevitably suffer. Perhaps here I shall come to look upon life through formal spectacles. There is no time for writing, which is just as well for my mother and father. They look upon my efforts as unpardonably immoral."

A month later West repented his words. His spirit of resignation was too shallow to be lasting. Again he wrote to Seminoff: "Already I am tiring of the serenity of the destiny which has been superimposed on me. I had thought that the great scarlets and golds of life had

been laid aside, but, alas! the challenge of independent endeavour is too strong to be ignored. I have padded my ears with platitudes and sophistries, but I still hear that call which has tortured me all my life. Last night I walked for hours in the warm starlight, thrilled with vivid perceptions. Returning to my room I sat up all night writing. So overcome was I by the instinct to create that I was totally unfit for my studies to-day. I am wondering now how long I can endure this life. The spirit of revolt is quickening in me. I fear it will become stronger than my sense of duty, my love for those who love me, and all the other ties that hold me here. Next year I am to be given a small instructorship in English. Shall I be able to accept it?"

As the days went by Stanford West's aversion to his new life grew. He began to neglect his studies that he might have time for his personal writings. He made no complaint to his father; his mind was still undecided. He knew that if he made a change it would be final. There would be no turning back. The great crisis of his life was at hand, and he hesitated before choosing his path. The cost of a change now was greater than before. Joseph West had grown younger this year. His son was with him, and the fulfilment of his hopes was imminent. The young man saw this, and shrank from dealing his father the blow from which he would never recover. He thought, too, of his mother. Her happiness also would be the price of his revolt. What if he should go away and fail? Was it not wiser to adhere to a small certainty than to risk all in a great gamble with the unknown?

"When I reason the matter out," he wrote Seminoff, "I am convinced that the duty to myself is greater than all other considerations. Yet my heart lacks the courage. Were it only my father who stood between me and my desire, I should go to him, and he would in a measure understand. But my mother could never forgive me in

her heart. All her life she would grieve. That is the thought which strangles me when I am about to speak. Her love is too strong and unreasoning. Her sorrow would haunt me always. Ah, dear friend, it takes courage to break the heart of one you love."

"To be true to yourself, you must be false to others," Seminoff answered. "All great achievement is paid for in suffering. These are the moulding years of your life. They alone will determine your future. The longer you hesitate, the stronger will grow the conventional bonds. Your resiliency of mind will go; your courage will dwindle; your chances of escape will slip away."

There were other letters of a similar nature. They all urged West to abandon his work at Greenwood, to strike out into personal fields, to follow his own dictates. Gradually his resolve was broken. One by one the trammels of his conscience fell from him. It became harder and harder for him to adhere to his studies. The demands for self-expression grew so persistent that there were days together in which his college duties were completely neglected. The volitional element of his actions diminished. He felt their inevitability, their fatalistic urgency. His efforts to battle against the current in which he had been caught took on the character of futility. Struggle as he might, the tide was washing him further and further away from the placid beach of his prescribed future. He became weary in both mind and body, and each day increased his fatigue. He kept his eyes resolutely on the shore, however, although the voice of his own desire grew louder and more impelling as he was drawn away, as by an invisible hand, from the bleak promontories of his routine. It took the full capacity of his will-power even to go through the motions of his present existence. His father watched him sadly but said nothing, hoping perhaps that his son's spirit of lethargy and disinterestedness would pass. His mother became more quiet than was her wont. She spoke seldom, and

often when she sat with a book before her, West noticed that her eyes were not on the print.

One night in early spring, unable to sleep, he arose from bed. The air was clear and fragrant and mild. The sky was white with stars, and the silent bursting life of the season seemed to palpitate with the ecstasy of parturition and growth. As he watched the green, young life that stretched out before him into the shadows of the hills, his ambition broke out afresh like a new crater. His writing was the most intensely real thing in all his experience: it was for him the very quintessence and sublimation of life. All else—duty, love, resolve, sacrifice, obedience, debt, even honour in the worldly sense—were but makeshifts, mirages, phantoms, things to be conquered, to be crushed and set aside. Gazing into the unknown future of his personal choice, he was blinded by its glow, saturated by its brilliance, like one who looks directly into a powerful search-light. He was penetrated by the indestructible certitude of a glittering and boundless success; and in his heart was the inaccessible serenity of faith. But accompanying this faith was the fear of extinction, of catastrophe. The brevity of life frightened him. He suddenly felt that he must make haste, that if he tarried an appalling calamity would befall him. He thought of the great dead—too quickly dead.

He arose suddenly as if an imperious voice had commanded him. Quickly sitting down at his desk he wrote to Seminoff: "You are right. I must follow the pointing finger of my own soul. Struggle is useless. My presence here, and the subjugation it implies, is cowardice. I have arrived at the astonishing conclusion that I am victimized alone by my mother. Were she eliminated from my considerations I should have departed long ago. My father would have grieved; but with him it is different. He is of my sex, an equal antagonist. The relationship between men is one thing: between a man and a woman the instincts are different. One may

triumph over men—even over one's father—and derive a certain amount of exhilaration from one's success. The law of survival accords with such a contest; men expect those things: it is a part of their spiritual heritage. But can a man triumph over women? Is there not something within every man that withholds from him the sense of victory? The power of women is insidious, like an ineradicable disease that gets into our blood and remains there for all time, to break out at intervals and torture us even when we are alone. My mother's love has dominated me since birth, changed and coloured my whole being, led me into byways, and followed me like an inexorable shadow wherever I went. She alone has kept me here. Her tears have been my shackles.

"But my resolve is made. I shall go from here with a broken heart on her account. I shall go soon, however, —in a few days. A power stronger than hers has turned my eyes away from my duty to her. If ever I am great, that may be her compensation. And yet I feel that the burden I must bear for her sake will be as great as the burden she will bear because of my decision. I have been a slave to her love too long. My term of service is over. To-night, for the first time, I have the power to break my bonds. I shall go to New York and serve an apprenticeship with some magazine. I shall write you from there. Perhaps we may see each other often."

XVI

A PERIOD of uncertainty and depression came upon Stanford West during his first weeks in the city where one epoch of his destiny was to be laid. The gusty passion of New York, the mammoth fever of its life, broke his high spirits and dampened his hopes. Heretofore, he had been merely a spectator of the city. He had been content to be caught in its vortex. His attitude toward it had been impersonal. Now that he was a part of its surging activities, now that he must overcome its current, bring to it all he had to offer and receive from it only what it chose to give, it took on a different mien. Its aspect was monstrous and cruel and everlastingly dictatorial. It was cold and unapproachable, fraught with outward and inner terrors, at once seductive and repellent. A terrifying loneliness swept over him. There was nothing that his hands might grasp and hold. All human actions and desires eluded him. They were in themselves too gigantic to be susceptible to circumscription, and yet they seemed too petty, when compared with the enormity of the city's power, to be worthy of attainment. Even the people he met and touched in their feverish to-and-fro seemed to belong to another life, another planet. There was an infinite gulf between him and them. He felt that should he shout at the top of his voice they would not hear him. He walked among them like a spectre, unseen, unheeded.

At first he regretted his decision to put Greenwood from his life. And at what a cost had he made good his resolve! The tears of his mother still burned into his flesh like living coals. When he had faced her and

pronounced his ultimatum he had seen for the first time the wrinkles about her eyes and mouth. He had noticed the streaks of grey in her hair. The tragedy of her age added to his sorrow. A new pity for the old, the departed, the unrecallable, entered his already heavy heart. He had expected his father to protest. He would have welcomed a struggle. But Joseph West sensed the inutility of argument. His grief was too deep for anger. He acquiesced quietly, almost apologetically, like a man who has been broken and is about to die and desires peace above all else. To what purpose had all this tragedy been? Was the city after all but a gaudy chimera?

Stanford West's entry into the game of authorship had been facilitated. He had come to New York with every advantage. He had been spared the drudging task of finding a foothold for himself. Joseph West had written a long letter to Harrison Dwight, an old friend of his youth, now owner and editor of the *Argonaut,* a conservative weekly publication. The young man had gone direct to him and been received warmly. He had been placed immediately on the periodicals' staff at a salary which at first astonished him, but which, on reflection, became only too clear to him. He saw his father's hand in this, too. The man whose hopes he had wrecked had retaliated by making his path smoother, by aiding him secretly in the fulfilment of his ambition. He pretended not to perceive the strategy, though he knew no novice could be worth the price paid him.

His work at first, though unimportant, was difficult. Inwardly he was opposed to the policies of the paper. His whole nature revolted against the principles which governed his writings. But equipment was what he needed, a practical understanding of his craft. And he knew that by the time he should have mastered its rudiments he would have saved enough to be independent. Then he would be able to turn to the things representative of his inner consciousness. His present work was but a

preliminary skirmish to the real fray of creative authorship, a prelude to the attainment of his feverish ambitions. At present he could not write from the urgent spring of his own emotions. But he was gifted with an unusual sensitiveness and receptiveness of sympathy and observation, and the divine philtre of self-confidence permeated all his labours.

The misgivings and loneliness which at first had depressed him gradually passed. Dwight encouraged him and gave him more important assignments. As an increasing latitude of expression was allowed him he developed a surety of phrase and an undefaced energy. He had an unfalterable and net instinct for words and a plausibility in presenting his point of view which began to attract the attention of his fellow workers. He thought clearly and concisely, and his articles were distinguished by a nudity of expression and a contempt for accessories which won him the confidence and admiration of readers. Things moved him strongly and dramatically, as they would a child who looked upon the world for the first time; but he always kept a rein on the vagaries of his nature. As he plunged deeper and deeper into the current of his work he felt the exhilaration of being at grip with life and its disillusions. Upon the teachings of earlier years he engrafted corollaries of his own derived from a direct observation of life. His development was rapid and sure.

Five months after he had been writing for the *Argonaut* Harrison Dwight sent for him.

"My boy," he said, "your father and I were very dear friends in the old days, and I have watched you with more than a mere professional interest since he sent you to me. Your work pleases me. Your ideas are youthful, but you'll get over them. There's a big career in store for you. You have promise—a lot of it. You've done enough miscellaneous work to satisfy me of your ability to tackle something bigger. Our drama man is

leaving, and I'm going to give you his work. That department has always wielded a big influence, and I want its character sustained. You can do it, but you must be careful. No radicalism. I've read your play—our man handed it to me. It doesn't represent the sort of ideal we care to uphold. I want you to get the modern point of view. You can, and you know how to write. Remember your responsibility. Don't misunderstand me. We want honest criticism—and not popular criticism either. We reach the better class of theatre-goers. Don't write down, but—don't go too high."

West was gratified with the honour the post implied. It was too much to hope for a free hand, for a chance to express completely his heresies. That would come later. As it was, he could at least write without stultification. He had become an appreciable factor in his new life. He felt exalted by the power his new work would give him. He would learn much, no doubt. It would be a rigorous training. Exacting demands would be made on his capabilities. The first faint evidences of realism—an importation from France—were being felt in the theatre. He deplored the fact, for realizing that the stage was an illusion, he felt that the reproduction of nature was obviously a fraud. But was it, after all, not a necessary step? Perhaps he might welcome the naturalistic drama, even fight for it, and still be consistent with his ideas of a serene and undogmatic culture. The *Argonaut,* he knew, would uphold him in his course. As such publications went, its policy was decidedly advanced.

His criticisms proved satisfactory. As the weeks went by he became conscious of the influence of his opinions. He clothed them in vigorous and convincing English. He was quick to detect flaws and inconsistencies. His analyses were deft and logical: and all the while he was acquiring a practical experience of life. He was becoming surer of himself, more confident of his ability to reach to high and permanent achievement. His eyes were

ever on the future. The present was a transition, a preparation for greater things. The spirit of the conflict enticed him. His work exhibited the errors and the splendours of enthusiasm, and he wrote with a fine sincerity. His hands were busy with the eternal and perpetual stuff of life.

It was inevitable that he should have been thrown in friendly contact with other participants in the game he had elected to play. He did nothing to avoid the companionships which grew up easily and naturally in the course of his activities. He found in the men and women about him a pleasant diversion. There was little intellectual give-and-take. His nature was too isolated and aristocratic, perhaps too subtle, to be understood in its innermost functionings by those whose work was an end in itself and the measure of their ideals. West held himself in strict reserve. He adapted himself to his environment; and because he understood instinctively the secret of politic adjustment he was at once liked and revered. He had a proud carriage, slightly assertive, but never aggressive. His bearing was easy and polished, with a trace of what at first seemed shyness, but what proved on acquaintance to be a sort of superior tolerance, a deference which the solidity of his nature could well afford —a leeway of submission which resulted from a superabundance of self-confidence. This intellectual placidity revealed an unobscured outlook behind which his personality blazed like a pure flame.

He found in those whose lives touched his on its informal side a relaxation from the strenuous duties of his work. His pleasures were of a more serious nature than had been the youthful escapades at the University. There was a maturity even in the gayest moments of his social diversions which kept him conscious of the serious side of his life. The men with whom he associated were held together by the common bond of their profession. Literary small-talk was continually breaking out during

their intercourse. They were not profound men. Their vision was limited by the immediacy of their interests. They considered the temporary effect of their work rather than its permanency. But West easily acquired their viewpoint, focusing his mind on the details of his new existence. He avoided intimacy, however; there was always a cloak of formality on his actions.

The women of his new environment interested him more. With them he was relieved of all necessity for mental posturing. They were informal and easy-going, spontaneous and attractive. They ignored the conventions and lived their lives according to their moods. To West the type was new and not without fascination. He found pleasure in calling at their apartments, joining their dinners at down-town restaurants, dancing with them after the theatre. His loneliness was thus dispersed. His association with them in time became a habit. They, in turn, looked upon him as a welcome visitor. He had a liveliness of mind which appealed to them. He knew how to meet emergencies, how to sympathize and how to laugh. He had acquired an exterior of worldliness, and his eyes had a cynical gleam which agreed with the cruelty of youth.

Of these women Margaret Moore was the youngest and most attractive. Without realizing the gradual growth of intimacy which their constant propinquity had fostered, West one night was confronted with the knowledge that she had interwoven herself into his desires. Formerly he had thought of her merely as one of the factors of his new life, an amiable and somewhat piquant companion for his lighter hours. He had never been alone with her. There was always a noisy, democratic group in her apartment, joking, laughing and singing, whenever he called there; and her attitude toward the men she knew was that of judicial good-fellowship. Her familiarity with many men had at first puzzled and displeased West. That was when he had been new to the

Bohemianism in the midst of which he found himself. But in time he had come to look upon the license of his social *milieu* with non-critical and approving eyes. Unmoral by nature, he justified to himself with slight difficulty the informality and freedom which characterized the actions of the men and women with whom he was thrown. In accepting this lax standard he acquired an impersonal viewpoint.

He began to drink. He took little enjoyment in it, but found difficulty in avoiding it when all those about him drank. It keyed him up to the pitch where he could fall in with their moods. He noticed that the women drank as much as the men. This fact did not accord with his idea of propriety—an idea which seemed suddenly to have been born when the fact first came to his attention. His prejudice though was soon snuffed out: a new atmosphere had come over his life and had saturated him as thoroughly as if it had been a wave of water. He had associated drinking only with one type of woman, but soon attributed his previous attitude to inexperience. Margaret Moore drank more than the others. She gloried in her indulgence. West watched her and listened to her with undisguised fascination. Her tongue was sharp, her laugh vibrant. She knew many stories and told them with vividness and contagious good-humour. Even her vulgarities were possessed of such spontaneous wittiness that to West they seemed natural and irreproachable. Nothing affected her seriously. Often in the midst of someone's recital of grievances she would interject a remark of philosophical levity, and the whole tone of the conversation would at once change.

Margaret Moore was twenty-five. She had played *ingénue* rôles in road productions since she was seventeen, though by hard work and perseverance she had recently appeared in the casts of two New York plays. They had both been failures, but she was loath to drop back into her former position, choosing to gamble with

larger stakes rather than accept the surety of secondary engagements. The stage was her life. Her ambitions were all-consuming; and she had no dreams save those of personal success. She had kept young for she knew the secrets of dress. To those unacquainted with her history she posed as twenty, and no one questioned the truth of her statement. Her real name was not known even to her most intimate friends. She had broken completely and irrevocably with her childhood ties. It was as if she had awakened for the first time in a strange and hostile world at her accession to womanhood. No one had ever interrogated her, and she vouchsafed nothing. She lived in a meagre degree of comfort. She was able to clothe herself attractively, but she was always on the edge of poverty. She complained good-naturedly of her enforced economies, as if she were afraid someone would suspect her of having money. "If some profitable part doesn't turn up soon, I don't know what I'll do," she would say. But for over a year she had been idle, and yet there was always enough money for the necessities, for occasional clothes, for little excursions and entertainments. Her financial condition never varied. All the facts of her existence pointed to a small but regular income. There was speculation, but no one ever learned the source of her livelihood.

She had a capacity for being agreeable. She was generous within her limitations. She knew the art of entertaining. She was gregarious by nature, and fond of people in the aggregate. Her spirit of catholicity made itself felt subterraneously. Consequently her rooms attracted visitors. She had a piano which she played moderately well; and there was always wine and brandy with which she was prodigal. West had taken an unadulterated pleasure in passing his free evenings with her. At her apartment there were men who knew his work and admired him, and there was also a feminine fellowship whose spuriousness he did not sense because to him the

experience was new. The women called him by his first name, and talked easily of intimate things. At times he sat with his arms about one of them, and not infrequently he kissed them at departure. There was no sentiment implied by such actions either on his part or theirs. He had often kissed Margaret Moore in just such a fashion, unemotionally and impersonally. And he had seen other men indulge in the same informal amenity. He had given no thought to the act. He had never associated it with passion. He accepted it as he would the unfamiliar etiquette or customs of an exotic people.

But one night in midwinter, after an unusually depressing day's work, he had turned toward her rooms with a pleasurable anticipation of solace and revitalization. As he walked through the bleak and icy streets he called up the familiar surroundings of her apartment—the deep wicker chairs, the cluttered table, the rep-covered divan, the gold-framed cheval-glass, the little open hearth, the chafing dish, the innumerable photographs, the hanging baskets and the enormous Japanese lantern. They all seemed to fill a specific void in his life. They meant more to him than he had imagined. They had become almost a necessary complement to his office routine.

As he hurried on to them, the vision of Margaret Moore disengaged itself from the familiar faces about her. He could not think of her impersonally. She suddenly assumed an individual importance, and West realized that she alone was guiding his instinct toward her rooms. He visualized her apart from the others, and at once experienced a pleasurable sensation. He even resented the fact that she would not be alone when he should arrive. He let his imagination play about her. He recalled the kisses she had given him. He thought again of her smiles, of her warm hand-clasps, of her intimate words. It occurred to him they had been different from those she had given the others. One night as he had sat beside her on the divan she had leaned

toward him slightly so that her body rested close against his. Had this been an unconscious act? He tried to convince himself that in her treatment of him there had been an undercurrent of affection which he alone had perceived, that beneath her exterior of impartiality there lurked a desire which only he might gratify. It pleased him to believe that this might be so.

For a week afterward West was conscious of her presence. He derived a delectable emotion by letting his mind recall her kisses and the numerous attentions she heaped on him whenever he visited her. There was no longer any doubt as to the meaning of her actions.

One night a dapper young man, a writer of popular magazine stories, taking advantage of a lull in the conversation, turned to her in feigned anger. "Marge," he chided her in mock distress, "how can you be so heartless as to devastate the lives of us who love you madly and passionately by heaping your charms entirely upon Brother West?" He wept ostensibly into his napkin.

"Sh-h-h-h!" she warned in a loud whisper. "Every wise actress wooes a critic."

The incident furnished West's dreams with tangible food. He no longer doubted his perception in her regard. His sexual nature, for months quiescent, awoke once more with its old fervour. He began speculating on the possibilities of a *ménage* wherein she would fill the place Irene Brenner had once held. He hesitated in his contemplation of this eventuality, remembering the tragic consequences of the earlier episode. But in the intoxication of his new passion his doubts were stifled. Margaret Moore was different. And had he too not undergone a fundamental change? He had matured. He had in a measure become the master of his destiny. His position had become solidified. He had learned the transitoriness of love, and that knowledge, he believed, had made him immune. The girl herself understood his needs. Like him she had ambitions. Surely he would have nothing

to fear from such an alliance. The affair would run its course and melt away into other events, answering to the needs of a new order.

One day he received a note asking him to come to her that evening. It was the first time she had ever written him or had offered him a definite invitation. The fact intrigued him, although he instinctively felt that her action was an outgrowth of the silent and unspoken desire she had for him—a desire to which her actions had attested. The hours of the day went slowly. His work dragged, and it was with difficulty that he discharged his tasks. He hurried to her after a scanty dinner, his whole being animated by a feverish eagerness. He found her alone. As he stood before her, holding her outstretched hand, there leapt between their eyes a silent understanding of the impulses which stirred them. That she had chosen to be alone when he came was but the consummation of her actions during the past weeks. It was a confession of the inner cause which had actuated the tenderness and interest she had displayed toward him. By this act she had dispersed any miasma of hypocritical conventionality which West might have expected when the time came for a frank acknowledgment of their passion. The barriers were down. He had won the conquest through her tacit surrender before a word had been spoken or a vow made.

He closed the door and, locking it, turned to her without a word. She was standing beneath the Japanese lantern in the shadow thrown by its base. Her head was bowed and one hand was clasped against her breast. She wore a *crêpe de chine* house frock of deep neutralized yellow. High above her waist a wide ultramarine sash was drawn tightly and twisted into a bow, the ends of which hung nearly to the floor, meeting and blending with her blue silken slippers and stockings. In her attitude of resignation she appeared to West incredibly young, more like a child than a woman. Her competency

and experience seemed suddenly to have fallen from her. He had never associated weakness with her; rather had he felt a security in the circle of her personality. But at the sight of her now his old sense of dominance rose up. She had ceased to be a companion. She was his prey —a challenge to him to assert his power. He went to her resolutely, as he might have approached a physical antagonist, his muscles tense with the instinct of the conqueror. His arms went about her, and he hugged her to him till he heard her catch her breath. With one hand he drew back her head that he might look squarely in her face. Her eyes were closed, her lips apart; and on her features was an expression of expectant fear. For a moment West gloated in the possession of her. Then his mouth met hers in a final sustained kiss.

An hour later the girl spoke. Her voice sounded strained and unnatural at the end of the long silence that had settled about them.

"I was afraid you couldn't come, dear." She was sitting on the floor before the hearth, resting her head against West's knees. She was crying gently, but when she spoke she smiled. "I told all the others not to come —that I had a headache and was going to bed. . . . I wanted you—alone. Do you know it's the first time we've ever been together without other people around us? I got so I hated the sight of them. They seemed like . . . enemies . . . or spies. I couldn't stand it any longer. I wanted to take you in my arms and . . . really kiss you. I wanted you to know how much I . . . truly loved you. . . . And all the time I wasn't sure whether— whether you really . . . cared for me. Sometimes I thought you did, but then . . . I couldn't see why you— —*you* should think more of me than you did of the others." She looked up at him with a pretence of fright. "But you do—don't you? Tell me, dear . . . do you truly and truly love me?"

West was caught in the strong heat of his passion.

"More than I've ever loved anyone," he told her. He did not doubt his words. His mind travelled back to Irene Brenner. He had difficulty in accounting for the fact that he had allowed her to bring about his failure at the University. She had passed from his life completely and irretrievably. His emotion for her was as dead as if it had never existed. She had left no sentimental scars on his nature. The memory of his intimacy with her was vague and indeterminate. He might as well have been a spectator of another's passion for all the personal impression the affair had made on him. Beside the warm reality of the present, his earlier love struck him as being cold and immature. Now that it was but a memory of a distant past its very essence seemed alien to his life. It had been commonplace, fraught with familiarity. Its colour was subdued. It was without the heat, the rapture, the mystery and the illusion of this new love for Margaret Moore. And his early sentiment for Alice Carlisle had been little more than a bloodless childhood romance. He smiled inwardly at his naïveté when he recalled his declaration of love for her. What could he have known of love then? He resented the victory of both her and Irene Brenner. They had taken advantage of his youth and inexperience. He had been unable to judge them, for he had then been without perspective, without a basis of comparison. From his present position he regarded his past with the mind of a man looking back cynically and with a sense of shame upon the follies of a boy. . . .

Margaret Moore reached for his hand and drew it to her lips.

"You will never let anyone take you from me?" she asked. "Now that I have you, I'm jealous of every other woman in the world. Some day you'll be such a great man. . . . You'll be sought after by women who can . . . give you so much more than I can. But I'll try hard to make you proud of me."

How different she was now from her usual self! All her lightness and triviality had disappeared. Her cloak of sophistication had been dropped. There were no longer any artificial poses or temperamental tropes. West felt that for the first time he had beheld her true nature—a nature tender and dependent and clinging.

"No one can take me from you," he consoled her. "Some day—before very long—you, too, will be a great success. You will be known everywhere. We'll both be busy and happy . . . conquering the world."

She hesitated before replying. Then she said, watching him closely: "If I only had a chance . . . I know I could make you proud of me. But I've worked so hard for years—and what has it all amounted to? When I try to get a good engagement there's always someone else who . . . wins out—someone with influence. A girl doesn't have a fair chance unless . . . she's willing to pay the price."

West was not unfamiliar with theatrical methods. He knew the truth of her words. He had been quick to learn the hidden workings of the stage. He had looked on at the mechanism of the system which governed dramatic productions, and he had protested against it as far as his paper had allowed him. Already in his brief experience he had seen women featured who had no histrionic claim to their positions. He had beheld other women, competent and deserving, crowded out by the ruthless injustice of personal considerations. And now the inequitability of selective theatrical methods had reached out and touched the girl he loved. A wave of anger passed over him. Then it occurred to him that he, too, had power and influence. He suddenly resolved to use it.

"Maybe we can find a way," he said.

XVII

West's life with Margaret Moore assumed a character alien to his speculations. He had preconceived it as not entirely unlike his existence with Irene Brenner, only he had imagined that all worry and strife would be eliminated, that only the joys and comforts of his earlier passion would have place in his new alliance. He had counted on Margaret Moore's experience and understanding. She had shown an almost masculine capacity for comradeship, and his own welfare had at all times seemed her chief concern. He could not picture her in the rôle of a self-centred pleasure seeker, willing to sacrifice his future to her temporary happiness. He had looked at the matter coldly before committing himself to her love. He had long since learned caution, and he shrank from a repetition of his University episode, no matter how great the compensation might be in physical ecstasy. He was too greatly concerned with the possibilities his future offered. His egoism had become more assertive. His belief in his intellectual prowess had become an ingrained conviction. He stood ready to sacrifice the emoluments of the present to the glory beyond the dawn.

It was during this time that his mind became crowded with dazzling and resplendent achievements. He clung fondly to those visions of to-morrow's triumphs. They alone were the submerged realities of existence: all else was esoteric, shadowy, phantoms dimly comprehended. The clear flame of his dreams robbed his actual life of all corporeality, just as moonlight strips the substance from the images of nature at night. He could see his future attenuated through the occult and unsound dark-

Nietzsche / Stephen Pedrick

ness of the unborn years like a chalk line upon a blackboard. These visions of his imaginary accomplishments were vague and befuddled, but they had tenacity and sumptuousness, and marched past him like a gorgeous army with fluttering pennons and glistening spears, militant, brave, resolute and indomitable. His pulses beat as to the rhythmic tread of soldiers. His spirit was seduced and his brain reeled with the intoxication of an unswervable belief in his own infallibility.

To this feeling of power Margaret Moore had in fact contributed. He knew she could not follow him to the heights toward which he was pushing, but he felt in her an instinctive faith which did not question the final meaning of his ideals, but which accepted blindly the ambitions he strove to achieve. And then there was the primitive appeal of her sensuality unencumbered by demands. This alone would have made her acceptable to him. But the realities of their life together did not harmonize with his dreams of what it was to have been. Though she did not maliciously interfere with his work, her attitude had subtly changed from one of helpful interest to one of indifference. When he reproached her for her apathy toward his writings she was contrite, but her contrition was obviously insincere. Yet she seemed genuinely eager that he should succeed. West was puzzled; but since she never interfered with his duties, he dismissed the problem as one which could be solved only by comprehending the whimsicalities of her nature. After all it was a minor matter. It was enough to be permitted to work without hindrance.

During his first week with her he had been contented and mildly happy, although the spirit of romance to which he had looked forward had not entered into their relationship. The mystery, even the novelty of his new experience, was shortlived. The allurement of her body had passed after the first few violent raptures of possession. The flame of his passion had flared up brightly and

straightway died out. It had been supplanted by a comfortable, but unemotional, atmosphere of habitualized acceptance and calm resignation. Despite the increased intimacy of their relations each had gradually drawn away from the other until their conversation had once more grown careless and impersonal. But the very informalities and immodesties of their life together wove about them a net which held them to each other as securely as an anxious love might have done. Habit played a large part in the affair. West felt a strong attachment for the repeated details of his new social routine: they fitted into his life securely, filling the empty hours of his evenings when he was too fatigued to pursue his personal writings. Then there was in the girl's constant nearness a mild gratification for his ever persistent instinct for mastery. The necessity to have some one about whom he could dominate was an infixed attribute of his character.

Again, Margaret Moore was the means of his exerting his influence in other quarters. The day following the consummation of their love he had called on the producer of a new play and recommended her inclusion in its cast. He had been astonished at the readiness with which his suggestion was acted on. It had made him conscious of the practical nature of his influence; and had given him the temerity to demand of another producer that the girl be given a leading rôle in another forthcoming piece. Here he had encountered some difficulty. Both the manager and the author had other plans from which they were disinclined to deviate. But he played his hand with diplomacy, promising a support in which he convinced himself he was justified. He believed he was able to judge the girl impartially. He saw in her the victim of an unjust system. He was sure of her talent; and the fact that he had met with opposition urged him on to force a successful outcome of his plan. He went so far as to request the co-operation of two other critics. In the

end he obtained an accession to his demands. The play ran for six weeks. He gave it a favourable review. It contained elements which permitted him to eulogize it without abrogating his former criteria. He was genuinely enthusiastic over the girl's performance, not realizing that he regarded her through the mists of his sexual desires. His praise of her had the ring of sincerity, and the other critics who respected him and the paper for which he wrote, began to question their own indifference to her acting. His criticism was judiciously quoted by the management of the play, and Margaret Moore's picture began to appear in the daily papers with sympathetic title-lines. The press-agent had been quick to take advantage of the situation, and before the play had run its course the girl's position had for the moment been established. West had paid for her gowns out of his savings, for her photographs and for the other items incident to her work.

It was at this time that their intercourse had assumed a new tenor. She exerted little moderation in her drinking. At first he had given scant thought to her habit of starting the day with a glass of brandy and soda. But the continual repetition of the act, coupled with her unrestrained drinking at night, began to affect him unpleasantly. The regularity of the practice revolted him. When he remonstrated with her, she refused to take him seriously, chiding him for his scruples. She had become careless of her personal appearance, and West had begun to notice her age. There were times when she appeared many years older than when he had first seen her. She had grown slovenly. At first she had taken scrupulous care of their rooms, and had always insisted on their having dinner in the apartment. Of late she had suggested their going out, pleading lack of time or disinclination to prepare the meal. Now their dining out had become a fixed habit. Heretofore she had risen and set the breakfast for him; but even this practice she had now aban-

doned. She had complained of her sleepiness in the mornings. Her rehearsals took all her strength, she had told West. After that he rose quietly and prepared his own breakfast. But at length he found that the dishes from the previous day were rarely washed, and he went back to his old custom of breakfasting at restaurants. He attributed the girl's shortcomings to her work at the theatre, and tried to console himself for his discomfitures by looking forward to the time when they would have sufficient money to hire servants. Although their combined salaries would have permitted them a certain degree of luxury, her money disappeared every week for the payments of debts she said had accumulated during the past year. It took all he earned to maintain their *ménage,* and he hesitated to touch the savings of his first months in the city. He would need them later when he should strike out alone in his personal work.

West went to Greenwood for two days at holiday time. The clear air of the country, the quietude, the comfort of his home, the tender administrations of his mother, produced in him a sense of tranquillity, of unassailable content. His maturity seemed but a masquerade he had been wearing during the past months. Amid the quiet scenes of his early life it fell from him. His emotions again became those of the boy he had been. But over his spirit there hung an atmosphere of melancholy. His home was like the ghost of something precious which had long since died. The river he had once loved was frozen; the trees which held for him so many early memories were bare; the hills which had mothered him during the first fierce urgings of his awakening nature, were bleak and inhospitable. All these things seemed to symbolize the desolation of his youth. He yearned again for the lonely silent days, for the clean rapture of his boyhood. In his old study, aware of the nearness of those who loved him most, he tasted once more of the irredeemable

serenity and peace which seemed to have passed forever from his life.

The day of his departure, as he walked down the snow-covered street from his father's College, living again the days he had once thought bitter, he saw before him the slim figure of a girl. Suddenly he felt a stir in his blood, a welling up of dead emotions. An unaccountable tenderness took hold of him, and he hurried toward her without questioning the impulse that guided him. As he took her arm gently and looked into her eyes, the heated dream of the immediate past was blotted out. He seemed to pick up the thread of his life where he had left it when he and Alice Carlisle stood together on Crow's Nest and vowed their eternal love amid their first tragic tears.

For a moment something constricted his throat. He heard the one word, "Alice," escape his lips. He scarcely recognized his own voice. The girl did not speak for a time. She looked at him wonderingly, almost appealingly; and in that look West beheld an infinite pathos, something elementally and eternally tragic. Somehow her eyes accused him and filled him with shame. The ineluctable sorrow he read in them passed into his own heart and became a part of him. Then, recovering herself, the girl smiled. There was a brief and strained interchange of banalities, and they walked on together toward the station.

She spoke of his work with unfeigned intimacy.

"Every week I read what you write," she said. "It seems hard to believe you are so young. Oh, but some day you'll be a great man!"

"Will you care?" The words came out before West realized it, yet, for some reason he could not analyse, it seemed that much depended on her answer.

She hesitated. Then she answered softly: "Of course, I shall care." It was not so much her words as her tone that warmed West's whole being.

"Have you really faith in me?" he asked next,

She smiled with tender assurance.

"I shall always have faith in you. No matter what happens or what you do I shall never lose that faith. . . . I haven't anyone to believe in now but you."

West looked at her and for the first time noticed that she was in mourning. He reached for her hand and held it tightly.

"I'm sorry," he said slowly. "I'm sorry for everything. I feel that I've done you a great wrong. But I meant it all then. You must forgive me."

"I know, Stanford." The girl spoke bravely. "That's all over now. You mustn't think about it . . . ever. You have your work to do, and nothing—not even the slightest regret—must ever interfere with it. You were only a boy then . . . you didn't know. I . . . ought to have known, but—I was so young then myself."

They were in the station now. The snow had begun to fall. A cold wind blew the flakes spasmodically against the window panes. In the centre of the room a large stove glowed red with fire. A romantic lethargy stole over West. He did not want to go away. His future appeared stormy and chill like the weather. Here it was warm and restful, and the presence of Alice Carlisle permeated him with solacing contentment. Her hand was still in his, and there was reborn in him the soft thrill that had accompanied his first consciousness of love.

From the distance came the muffled whistle of the approaching train. West turned to the girl quickly.

"I *did* mean it, Alice," he said in a low voice. "I meant every word of it. And I don't want to go from you now. . . ."

She turned toward him, and he caught her in his arms and kissed her. Then he arose suddenly, flushed.

"I'm sorry," he stammered. "I'm a brute. . . . I shouldn't have done it. . . . That kiss was a lie. I don't understand—but try to forget . . . what I did.

It was wrong—only I couldn't help it. . . . Tell me you won't think of it. . . ."

The girl held out her hand without looking up.

"Good-bye." West could barely hear her.

He took her hand a second, and went without another word.

West re-entered New York with a heavy heart. He tried to analyse the source of his depression, but failed. He went direct to his rooms hoping to find stimulation in Margaret Moore. It was late afternoon: already the darkness had begun to fall. He rang the bell several times; then let himself in with his key. The place was empty. The embers in the hearth were cold. Gloom and chill were over all. He lighted the gas and drew the shades. As he looked about him he recoiled at the sordidness of his surroundings. So gradually had come the many changes over his new mode of living that he had not noticed them. One by one they had crept upon him, and he, blinded by the novelty of his worldly existence, had not felt them. Greenwood had awakened him with its spring-tide of old memories. The squalor of his soul had been cleansed by the revisioning of his love for Alice Carlisle.

He stood in the centre of the room, suffocated by the heavy atmosphere. The degradation of it all! On the piano were numerous glasses sticky with dried fluid. On the floor by the divan was an empty decanter. Sheets of music were scattered about. Dirty dishes were piled on the table, some with stale food in them, others black with ashes. There were more ashes on the floor, and crushed cigarette ends. The furniture was in disarray. In the kitchen he could hear the dripping of water. He passed on into the sleeping room. The bed was unmade. There was soiled linen on the floor. The window and curtain were down, and the air was close. A fashion magazine lay open on a chair. Powder had been spilled

on the dark red cover of the commode. The little silver clock on the mantel had stopped.

As he returned to the main room he heard a key in the door, and in another moment Margaret Moore stood before him. She smiled languidly, and waved to him jovially with one hand. With the other she steadied herself against the door. Her face was flushed, and her eyes were glazed. West had often seen her under the influence of drink, but now, for some reason he did not attempt to explain, the sight of her disgusted him.

"What's the matter, old boy?" she called gaily, studying him with nonchalant quizzicality. "You look worried. I know what you need—a little bracer." She went unsteadily toward the kitchen.

West caught her by the arm and jerked her round. She retreated from him and sat down.

"A damned pleasant return I've had!" he commented bitterly. "To come back to a cold, dirty apartment like this—with you not even here: and then to have you come in drunk!"

She looked at him angrily, but said nothing. Taking off her gloves and coat, she threw them on the divan.

"Hang them up," West demanded. "There's enough clutter here already."

She obeyed him sullenly.

"Now go to bed." His tone was peremptory.

She regarded him a moment, and then laughed.

"Nothing in the world could keep me up, dearie," she answered carelessly.

The next morning West rose early and went out for his breakfast. When he returned Margaret Moore was up. Her appearance emphasized the revulsion he had felt toward her the previous night. Her hair was uncombed. There were conspicuous lines in her face, and her eyes were still heavy with sleep. Her dressing-gown was soiled and spotted with cigarette ash. Her pale blue stockings were wrinkled about her ankles, and the pompon

was missing from one of her slippers. She was drinking a cup of tea and smoking a cigarette.

West waited till she had finished.

"Now suppose you do a little housework," he said, "and get this place fit to live in."

"You're getting tired of me, aren't you?" She asked the question scornfully as if she did not care what his answer would be.

But West, too, was indifferent. For the moment he welcomed the prospect of a dissolution of their relationship. He stepped toward her firmly.

"That's it," he snapped. "I'm tired—damnably tired of your shiftlessness and easy-going ways. I've put up with them as long as I'm going to. I'm tired of the crowd that's here every night after the theatre. I'm tired of getting up in a cold room and going out to breakfast. I'm tired of the way this place looks every day. I'm tired of your constant drinking and running about. I'm tired of your lack of interest. I'm tired of the whole affair the way things are now——"

"Would you rather I'd go?" she put in resignedly, rising.

"Suit yourself."

West turned and began building a fire. Five minutes later the girl was standing where he had left her, watching him mutely. Then slowly she began to take down her dresses from the wardrobe, preparatory to packing them. She was sobbing audibly. Every few moments she glanced surreptitiously at West. But he was paying no attention to her. In the midst of her sorting and arranging she suddenly ceased. She went to the piano and began gathering up the soiled glasses. She stooped and picked up the fallen music and arranged it neatly on the rack. Then she took the dishes from the table and carried them into the kitchen. In a moment he heard her washing them.

"Stan," she called to him, "you'd make a great Mal-

donado. I believe if I'd gone you'd have broken the furniture. . . . Oh, Stan, I wish I could go with you to *Iris* to-night. I think the play would console me." She worked on in silence for a while. "I simply must get an apron," she said.

After that night West had little to complain of in her attitude. He readily forgave her for her past conduct. He reasoned that she had probably been so absorbed in her success, so enraptured by the glamour of her new importance, that all other matters for the moment had lost their significance for her. He applied the standard of his own emotions to her, and arrived at a state of benign tolerance toward all her previous deficiencies. Her play closed a week later, and she again devoted her entire time to his comfort. If, in the evenings, he expressed a desire to be alone, she saw to it that there were no visitors. She chafed under the loneliness of her existence, but never reproached West for any unhappiness which his inclinations caused her.

Under ordinary circumstances her nature would have rebelled, but her practical instinct dictated acquiescence. At bottom she was calculating and business-like, shrewd and observant. Her unvoiced religion was to get on in the world. Toward that end she directed all her energies. Few opportunities for her advancement had presented themselves to her which she had not seized. But the practicality of her character was not conscious and reasoned. She did not sacrifice her sentiments to it. She would not deliberately have bartered herself for personal aggrandizement. She was shallow, but not hardened. Her discriminating astuteness was only an instinct, but it was a powerful instinct, and had been developed and coloured by her ambitions. It governed her actions, and influenced the direction her affections were to take. This fact, however, she never admitted to herself. She believed her heart was her guide. If, in the functioning of that organ, advantages accrued, she merely considered them

incidental. Her emotions were the disguise of her ambitions. She was clever and imaginative, fond of life and the glitter and adventure of life. She had the defects of a sensitive feminine temperament.

She believed that her sentiment for West was natural and spontaneous. The true cords that held her to him were invisible to her. It delighted her to think that she should have made someone love her who could assist her in obtaining the things she sought. Her love for him was not deep, but she constantly endeavoured to keep it alive, to make it mean much to her. She built up about him unknowingly a great edifice of pretence, and convinced herself that it was real. Her instinct told her she needed him, and by a process of constant self-suggestion she arrived at the point where she believed that she wanted him, aside from his utilitarian value. Otherwise she would not have sold herself, no matter how beneficial such a transaction might have proved.

Spring came and went, and their life together assumed more and more the nature of an inexorable routine. They quarrelled often over petty matters. In one or two unusually violent scenes West had been tempted to end the affair; but something held him from taking the final step which would terminate all intercourse between them. It was not the heat of his desire for the girl which restrained him,—that had long since chilled. It was not that he feared facing the future without her,—she had ceased to mean anything to him in his work. In fact, he rarely mentioned it to her, and she never referred to it except in an impersonal and perfunctory way. When alone he told himself it was best that the alliance be severed. Yet when the hour of conclusion came he always let it slip by without taking action:—a more propitious time would come later, he would tell himself.

Thus the end was always postponed. The associations of his present life were more tenacious than he had imagined. Even the recurring conflicts between them had

become a habit. He now accepted them as part of the routine in which he had been caught. They were not the result of any basic misunderstanding. They grew out of insignificant causes: sometimes they seemed to have no tangible reason for having developed. They could not be foreseen. A word, sometimes only a glance, was enough to evoke them. These ruptures all ended the same way. The girl would be reduced to tears; the mood would pass; and the current would again flow smoothly on. They were momentary ruptures and did not undermine the relationship they invaded. Rather did they belong to it, actually becoming cementing factors of it.

In the late summer the problem of Margaret Moore's engagement came up for discussion. West, then more firmly established than ever before, began to make inquiries. He was aware that he had obtained her last position for her at a time when she was almost unknown. Now, with the added foundation of her success to build on, he decided to strike high. It was a matter of personal pride with him—the pride of ownership. And there was also a desire on his part to accomplish an act of justice with mighty influences working against him. The abstract love of accomplishing a difficult task furnished added incentive. He did not fear a reprimand from his paper, for he was convinced of the righteousness of his efforts to secure for the girl an important part in the coming season's productions. He was on friendly terms with many theatrical managers. They respected him and took his criticisms with serious consideration. West knew that any favour he might ask, provided it did not demand too great a concession on their part, would be granted. But he would not be satisfied with anything save the highest.

Anticipating difficulty, he made preparation by solidifying himself personally with other influential critics. Two of them had a similar favour to ask of him: they, too, were interested in girls whom they desired to put

forward. West promised his support. When at last he had found a rôle which satisfied him and pleased Margaret Moore, he was in a position to offer attractive inducements in return for her contract. Before he had consummated his plan he found himself involved more deeply than he had imagined. That he had agreed to forgo his honesty, to release himself from the high standards he had set, did not enter his calculations until it was too late to retract. His enthusiasm in his struggle for power had blinded him. He had been led into an impasse from which he could not escape except by being false to his inner convictions.

But West was not to be called upon to sacrifice his honour in the girl's behalf. Nor was he to be allowed to fulfil the rash promises he had made his fellow critics. A calamity, whose presence he had never considered, awaited him. The events of his life were following one another with serenity; and then, of a sudden, his existence was turned up side down.

XVIII

For nearly a week Margaret Moore had been unusually silent. She had lost her buoyancy. She obeyed West without hesitation, quietly and resignedly. She did not react to his irritations but accepted them with calm and equanimity. During the first few days of her saturnine tractability West regarded her condition as a passing mood. She was high strung, and he thought that the psychological pendulum had temporarily swung to another extreme. He said little, working ardently during the day, and reading and writing during the evenings. He began to see the end of his present labours. He needed another year's training. Then he would be ready to throw himself into the game single-handed.

He wrote to Seminoff: "Everyone who aspires to high literary achievement must learn to write. There are no instinctive writers. Style must be mastered like a difficult trade. Here I am acquiring much knowledge, but I am not ready yet. By this time next year perhaps my pen will not seem heavy or clumsy." On the very night he wrote the words Margaret Moore expressed a fear to him which opened up a heretofore uncharted region of his nature, a region of dread and uncertainty, filled with indistinguishable spectres and fraught with sinister possibilities. She had withheld the information from him for a week, hoping it might prove untrue. But there was little doubt now that she was pregnant. She accepted her condition sullenly, and when she apprised West of the fact there was a note of accusation in her voice.

His mind, sensitive and imaginative, received the news with its full force of disaster. It unnerved him. It crowded everything else from his thoughts. He lay awake at night conscious of some terrifying catastrophe hanging over him. Coupled with the fearful anxiety which the girl's confession had brought him, was a subtle and corroding fear—a fear all the more insidious because he could not understand it. His mind had always dealt with facts which could be foreseen. Now he was in new territory. The results he could not guess. His fear affected him like sorcery. His mind began to speculate automatically on the reconstructed future which had suddenly clouded his horizon. His whole outlook underwent a metamorphosis. No longer could he stand true to the higher claim of his nature. The firmament of his life had become chaos and been plunged in darkness. The indefiniteness of his predicament seemed only to accentuate his morbid imaginings. The girl had suggested several times the possibility that his present horrors might prove unfounded. But in this slim chance of escape there was no consolation. The cold hand of tragedy had taken hold of him and would not be shaken off.

For a week he struggled to keep himself sufficiently under control to do his work. But the exertion was tearing down his strength. There were obvious signs of deterioration in all he wrote. Late one afternoon when the bell across the square from his window began ringing, a feeling like nausea swept over him. On that day, even during the luncheon period, he had been applying himself with tremendous effort to the tasks before him, trying to overcome the fear that was eating away at the base of his brain. The bell, as if warning him of the approaching night, broke down his self-control. Like an automaton he finished the article on which he had been labouring. It was as if he had continued on the mere momentum of the day's earlier hours, just as a

Marathon runner, unbalanced by the long strain, continues to run after the tape has been passed. The words he set down meant nothing to him: they were not a part of his life.

Once in the street the chill which had come over his hands during the last hour at the office, spread over his whole body. It was not a cool night, but he shivered perceptibly. The crowds began to close in on him, but he did not notice them. He saw a girl bend over to recover a package she had dropped. Something in her gesture and the shape of her ankles reminded him of Margaret Moore, and his fear immediately became more conscious. What would she have to tell him when he reached the apartment? Or rather, how would she look at him? It would not be necessary for her to speak: he would know the minute he saw her. He was more nervous to-night than he had been during the past week. Each day had diminished his hope. He tried to argue with himself that the approaching tragedy would prove a lie. It came over him that it was too overwhelming, too stupendous and far-reaching, to be a reality. But he found no solace in his enforced reasoning. The distance to where he lived seemed interminable, but the walk invigorated him. He could have gone miles without tiring.

He entered the room quietly. Margaret Moore was standing at the window. Hearing him, she turned. The gas was low, but West could see her features distinctly. Her face was slightly pale and drawn, like that of a person who has been without sleep for many nights. The rouge on her cheeks and lips did not belie her pallor. There was a slight droop to her shoulders, an extra limpness to her arms. Her vitality was spent. He did not need to ask her: by looking at her he knew there had been no change. He kissed her tenderly. There was no longer any passion between them.

"This is a gay old world," she commented drily. "Rehearsals in two weeks—and this nursery business staring

me in the face. I feel the way Sarah Bernhardt acts in *Camille!*"

West did not resent her levity. It increased his affection for her. He sat down heavily.

"When will dinner be ready?" he asked. He was not hungry. He put the question in order to kill the intolerable silence that followed her remark.

She began putting the food on the table, singing "Rock-a-bye, baby, in the tree top" with gloomy facetiousness. The song brought back an old memory to West's mind. The night he had met Irene Brenner a drunken student had sung the song holding a sleeping girl on his arms. That vision of his earlier youth made him shudder. It bore some cryptic relation to his present state.

"Keep still," he irritably commanded.

"I was only rehearsing my future rôle," the girl explained lightly. Her mood was obviously forced. She fell into silence. At the end of the meal West asked suddenly: "Isn't there anything to be done—some way out?" He knew in a vague way that child-birth was preventable. Of the means and the details he was ignorant.

"Of course there is." Her tone was matter-of-fact. "The thing is to know where to go."

She rose and passed into the kitchen. On her way out she touched West on the shoulder affectionately. It made him tremble a little. Lighting a cigarette, he tried to formulate some plan of action. How would he get advice? What did other people do under such circumstances? He thought of his few casual friends—of the ones most likely to give him counsel. He dismissed from his mind those he knew in New York. There was Seminoff: a letter would bring him. Then it suddenly occurred to West that he could not go to anyone he knew, that he must work in the dark, and with strangers.

He had consulted a physician regarding a minor ail-

ment shortly after his arrival in New York. His mind at once reverted to the occasion. A gleam of hope stabbed his darkness. He recalled the doctor—a kindly and competent man, by no means unapproachable. He put on his hat and walked hurriedly out. At the pharmacy to which he went the telephone was in use. A girl in gaudy attire chatted easily, pausing occasionally to laugh affectedly at the answers her remarks called forth. West watched her impatiently. What right had she to use the telephone for unserious matters when he was in such dire need of it? The clerk asked him politely if he was being waited on, and it occurred to him that this man—this dealer in mysterious drugs—could inform him of what he wished above all things to know. He was on the point of asking when shame overcame him. He merely shook his head. The girl had turned from the telephone. West recognized her trade. His instinct was to follow her—she surely could enlighten him. Again he checked himself; the thing was too sordid.

He found the doctor's number. A woman answered him. He learned that the man who, for the moment, he regarded as his one possible avenue of escape, was absent from the city and would be away for a week. He returned to the apartment. Opening the door, he heard the clatter of dishes in the kitchen. All of his domestic details suddenly appeared insignificant in the presence of this new matter. He wondered why Margaret Moore should busy herself with clearing away the dinner dishes until this overtowering affair should be settled. He recalled, with a sense of remorse, that he had once driven her threateningly to do the things she was now doing. He experienced for her a feeling of great sorrow, of all-pervading tenderness. Later he told her where he had been, explaining that they must wait a week. Nothing more was said. West realized that he was physically exhausted. The strain of the preceding days had un-

manned him. His eyes were heavy; his shoulders weighted down. He went to his room.

But sleep did not come immediately. His mind began to speculate. In New York there were hundreds of men in his position. His predicament was probably not unusual. He thought of the people he knew, and tried to recall the number of children they had. Harrison Dwight had been married a great many years and had no children. Alice Carlisle was an only daughter. He himself was an only son. His thoughts led him nowhere. They merely impressed on him the irrationality of life. No logic could dispel the patent fact of his tragedy. He then tried to prefigure the threatening future. He might marry Margaret Moore and evade the disgrace of illegitimate fatherhood. The moment he thus projected his life with her into the coming years the scales of illusion fell from his eyes. He did not love her. A prolonged intimate existence with her would be insupportable. Disgrace was preferable. And what of his work, his hopes for greatness, the blinding visions of a conquering success? The brilliant and fantastic structure of his dreams toppled about him. He could not shake the responsibilities which obscured, like great threatening storm clouds, the dazzling skies of his future. They would hold him a slave to the drudgery of enforced labour. A shallow, restless sleep smeared out his calamitous conjectures.

He was no longer fit for work. His tasks at the office accumulated: he could not keep abreast of them. At the theatre he was unable to hold his mind to an analysis of the plays. When he attempted to criticize them, he found difficulty in recording his impressions: they were confused, and coloured by his fears. His judgments were unsound. There was a base alloy in the metal of his mind. He strove to protect himself by writing noncommittally. A weakness and insecurity crept into his criticisms. They lacked vigour and initiative. Even their serenity was clouded. His decadence was palpable.

Harrison Dwight wrote him a long letter of complaint. Dwight always avoided personal intercourse with his sub-editors. For this West was thankful. He exerted himself more than ever, but the only result was that each night he suffered a greater fatigue. His work did not improve. He began to fear for his position, and there was added another worry to his mental burden. The problem of livelihood confronted him as a possibility. He still had a few hundred dollars saved, but that would go quickly should he be released from the *Argonaut*.

The day came when the physician on whose help he vaguely counted returned to the city. West went to him. He hesitated before the doctor's residence, framing sentences with which to explain his situation. He had a presentiment that unless he said just the right thing he would be unsuccessful. He was handicapped too by a sense of shame. A woman in black entered the house and he followed her. There were several people waiting in the reception room. He speculated individually on their reasons for being there. Then he began to make a careful study of the objects in the room. He remembered them all from his previous visit. He approached the framed diploma and tried to decipher the signatures. After a while he went to the centre-table and tried to read an old magazine. But he was too nervous, and merely looked at the pictures. His turn came. The doctor appeared at the door and nodded to him. His heart began to beat rapidly; his lips became dry.

Once in the office with the door closed, the doctor put his hand on West's shoulder in a friendly way.

"What can I do for you, my boy?" he asked, motioning to a chair.

"I came to you before—some months ago," began West. "Perhaps you remember me."

The doctor nodded.

Then West explained the cause of his visit. After the first few sentences he had himself well under control.

He spoke firmly and fluently. But before he had finished the older man interrupted.

"Look here, my boy," he said gravely, "don't go on. There's nothing to be done. You'd better go home and think it over from another angle."

"Nothing to be done!" West felt the fear that had hounded him for two weeks suddenly strengthen.

"It's dangerous business. . . . Put the idea out of your head." The man's tone was final.

West arose unsteadily. "I thought—you might know of something to do."

The doctor shook his head. "Don't consider it, sir," he advised coldly.

West hesitated:—this was his only chance.

"You mean you won't—help me?"

"No, sir," the doctor replied emphatically.

Still West remained. "Couldn't you send me to some one?—Isn't there anyone you could recommend?"

"I don't know of anyone." The doctor walked to the door.

As West passed out he paused and asked in a last desperate attempt to find a solution: "Where could I go for advice?"

Again the doctor shook his head.

"I don't know that either. Men who do that sort of thing keep pretty well under cover. It's criminal, you know."

Desperate, West visited several other doctors. He looked for their signs along the street as he returned to his office. In each case the result was the same as in his first interview. Not one so much as held out hope to him. Twice he was rebuffed with discourtesy. By noon a feeling of utter helplessness overcame him. His mind gave way to the inevitability of the situation. The tide which had been steadily rising about him had at last inundated him. He resigned himself. His spirit was broken. The future was entirely blotted out.

That night he did not return immediately to the apartment. He felt the need of distraction, of many voices, of noise, and colour and confusion. He entered a brilliant and crowded café and ordered whiskey. He thought the stimulation it would give him might help efface his depression. He regarded the men round him with inquisitive animosity. Their loud joviality accentuated his depression and filled him with the agony of personal injustice. Why had they all escaped the tragedy which had befallen him? Why should he alone of all these bantering men have been victimized by circumstances? He hated and envied them. He felt like striking them, like tearing the laughter from their mouths. A panic of fear and apprehension rose in his mind, and he motioned the waiter to bring him more whiskey.

An hour later he went out again into the street. His brain was reeling. The lights about him danced fantastically. The people passing him were blurred masses of black. His body seemed to have lost its solidity, and when he touched his face with his hands his flesh was without its usual tactility. A gay recklessness had driven the poison from his mind. His perceptions had become blunt. He thought of his impending doom and caught himself in the midst of uncontrolled laughter. He was conscious that several of the indistinct phantoms had paused and were eyeing him with amusement. He experienced a sudden friendliness for them, and waved his arms to them good-naturedly. They did not respond to his greeting and, angered by their detachment, he passed on, steadying himself along the sides of the buildings. The night air braced him up a little; the realities came flooding back. He went into another café and began drinking again. The more he drank the less was he tortured by his fate. Life, for the moment, became inconsequential, even frivolous.

Before he reached his rooms it was past midnight. Later he remembered vaguely that some man had taken

his arm and asked him where he lived, and that the man had guided him up the stone steps that led to his front door. He had difficulty in ascending the stairs inside, and a dozen times he sat down to rest and to laugh at the absurdity of his struggles to reach his door. As he entered the apartment his vision was so confused that he could not distinguish any of the objects of the room. The floor swept suddenly from under him. There appeared to be a silent explosion of blurred lights and furniture. He felt himself pitching forward and was conscious of a crash and a sharp pain in his shoulder. Margaret Moore leaned over him and took his head in her arms.

"Are you hurt, Stan?" he heard her ask softly.

He tried to rise, and her arms were about him helping him. He looked up at her. She was smiling.

"How did you ever manage to carry it home?" she asked. "You astonish me, Stan. And there was a time when you scolded me for drinking! You might at least've taken me along. . . . You always were a selfish beast." Her reprimand was amiable.

She almost carried him to his bed, and removed his shoes and collar. By this time he had fallen into a heavy, stertorous sleep. She turned out the lights.

A month slowly drew itself out. West had begun to drink more and more, oblivious to all personal consequences. His thoughts had become a kind of desperate chaos. His sense of proportion vanished. He lived each day like a man to whom to-morrow is non-existent. He no longer planned. His last drop of sentiment for Margaret Moore had dried up. She had become for him a charge from whose presence there was no escape—a punishment imposed on him by cruel and ever-watchful gods. An inflexible and steadfast instinct of loyalty held him to her. He pitied her profoundly, and yet he resented hotly the ruin she had brought on him.

Their relationship had undergone a serious change. A

masked hate had entered it. She taunted him with his inability to extricate her from her predicament, intimating that he had been false to some trust she had put in him. He was too dispirited to defend himself against her accusations. He merely became morose and not infrequently went from her, returning late when he knew she would have retired. He thought it incomprehensible that she should have begun her rehearsals, but he said nothing to her about it. He ascribed the fact to her loneliness during the day. She took immaculate care of the apartment. She arose every morning and prepared his breakfast. Dinner was ready for him each night when he returned from his work. The silences between them grew. Only one subject was ever uppermost in their minds, and they chose not to speak of it. To appear interested in other things was too obviously a pretence.

At the end of the month Margaret Moore returned from rehearsal in an unusually serious mood. She was late, and West was already at the apartment.

"I've found someone to go to," she informed him. "One of the girls at the theatre sent me to her doctor. I went to see him. . . . Only," she added, "it will take a lot of money."

For some reason West was not elated at the news. He experienced a feeling of fright as if he had been unexpectedly confronted by a strange and mysterious monster. His mind had become adjusted to his fate. He knew what to expect. But this other course which the girl's words had opened, inspired in him a new and different kind of fear.

Margaret Moore's confidence, however, quieted his doubts. By the following day he was in a frame of mind where anxiety supplanted his alarm of the previous night. All work was now impossible until the matter should be finally settled, and he did not even go to the office. He was too nervous to read, and walked the streets for hours

trying to project his mind into the future. There were minutes when he felt light-hearted, when his old hopes and ambitions loomed up again and set his heart beating fast. But these waves of pleasure were followed by others of dread and panic. He would come abruptly to a halt, aghast at the terrifying mystery of what was to take place. He could not put his finger on the cause of his alarm, but the words of the first doctor he had consulted came back to him with grim insistence—*"It's criminal."* Would he in any way be involved in its criminality? He was startled by a sense of his own guilt, and a fear of personal consequence overpowered all his other apprehensions. It occurred to him he should seek the advice of someone who knew, and he began to scan the windows of office buildings for lawyers' signs.

West entered the first office he found. He had a long wait, but the sound of the lawyer's voice behind the glass door, talking in a flat confidential voice to another client, gave him a feeling of security. At the end of half an hour he was led into the presence of a tall wiry man whose hair was unkempt and whose clothes were very loose and wrinkled. At the end of West's recital, the lawyer leaned back and folded his hands meditatively.

"You understand, sir," he began, "that what you propose doing is against the law. Now, since the girl is of age she can bring no criminal action against you. However, you will be responsible for the support of the child, provided, of course, she can prove that you are its father and files notice to that effect within a given time, presenting a certificate from a reputable physician testifying to her physical condition. I might say that it is difficult to disprove responsibility for a child unless you could show you were absent from her during the entire period of possible inception. That, as I understand, you are not in a position to do. In any event she cannot force you to marry her."

The lawyer paused and regarded West critically.

"What is your occupation, sir?" he asked.

West told him of his work and named the paper with which he was connected.

The lawyer nodded approvingly.

"Well, now, Mr. West," he went on, "here is a suggestion which I put forward as an alternative to your own plan regarding the situation, which, as you know, is illegal and therefore inadvisable,—it is this: now it is possible for the prospective father of a child to pay over to the woman involved, provided she is agreeable, a certain sum of money—the amount to be decided on between you and her—in exchange for which she gives you a release from all demands, that is, lets you out of all responsibility for the maintenance of the child."

"That isn't the point," West replied. "Neither of us wants the child."

The lawyer smiled slyly.

"She can do whatever she chooses with the money once she had it, can't she? That is her affair, not yours, so long as you have done your duty toward her and hold her release."

West began to understand.

"You mean," he asked, "that I pay her ostensibly for the child's support and get her receipt to that effect, and that she may then go ahead and prevent it without involving me?"

"Precisely." The lawyer leaned forward and drew a printed form from a drawer of his desk. "You must remain ignorant of any criminal intent on her part. It is your only safe course in such matters."

West hesitated but a moment. His scruples had long since been overridden by his ambitions. It was no time now for moral considerations. He experienced no sense of wrong in the act to which he was about to be an accessary. His whole instinct was to throw off the burden of the past weeks. He grasped at this one means of escape like a dying man who loves life above everything.

His instinct of self-preservation made all else appear irrelevant and inconsiderable.

"Will you arrange matters—legally?" he asked, and for the first time in a month his voice had a ring of enthusiasm.

"Bring the young lady here to-morrow morning," the lawyer answered, rising. "My fee will be fifteen dollars."

Margaret Moore received West's information concerning the release with undisguised anger.

"Why should I protect you?" she asked with sarcasm. "Are you too much of a coward to take the same chances I am—you who are to blame for it all?"

It seemed to West as he stood looking at her that she had never loved him. And he asked himself incredulously if he himself had ever loved this painted girl who was sneering at him. He longed to be rid of her, to blot from his mind every vestige of her memory.

"What have you done to deserve all the best of it?" There was the scorn of hate in her voice. "You weren't even man enough to protect me."

"I was ready to stand by you, whatever happened." The tension under which he had been living had snapped. He was calm almost to the point of lethargy. "I was ready to sacrifice everything for you."

"What could you do for me?" she asked bitterly. "You helped me get an engagement—that was all you were good for. What an idiot I was to have had anything to do with you!"

West was too relaxed for anger. It mattered little what she said to him. He was too indifferent even to resent her words. He smiled wearily at her rage. There was something inordinately ludicrous in the vehemence of her temper.

"If I sign that release to-morrow," she continued angrily, "you'll have to give me every penny you have in the world."

Even this threat did not move West. He would gladly

have given her ten times the amount had he owned it. Nor did he begrudge it to her. Despite his indifference he still felt that he was under some sacred obligation to her. This feeling involved his honour: it belonged to that part of him which he thought had been killed but which had unexpectedly come back to life that day.

The next morning Margaret Moore packed all her clothes and had them moved to a hotel. Neither she nor West spoke to the other. On their way to the lawyer's office West stopped at his bank and drew out what money he had.

The legal transaction occupied but a few minutes. The girl openly showed her resentment; but when they were once more in the street her manner softened. She smiled almost tenderly and held out her hand.

"Good-bye, Stan," she said, as if reluctant to sever their long connection.

"Good-bye," West repeated, taking her hand and holding it close. For a second a ghost of his old emotion for her haunted him. He watched her as she hailed a coupé and drove away.

He was never to see her again.

XIX

West imagined his mind would be free of anxiety once he had secured her release and had been finally separated from her. But as he stood looking after her he knew he would have no peace until he had learned the outcome of the action she had decided to take. He did not fear for himself. His feeling was a subtler and more deeply-rooted anxiety than that of mere personal safety. He knew that psychologically the affair had not been terminated. A sense of moral responsibility still clung to him. The bands of loyalty had not yet been broken, and he realized that should Margaret Moore return to him in distress and seek his aid he would exert in her behalf the full force of his protection. He had sought to disentangle himself from the mesh of his emotions; but he had succeeded in obtaining only the semblance of liberation. He endeavoured to disavow all obligations, to convince himself of the unreasonableness of any future claim she might make against him. But his efforts ended in confusion. His apprehension held him tenaciously. His mind demanded absolute knowledge of her safety, and no amount of logic could satisfy that demand. His instinct dictated that he follow her and ascertain the details of her plan, but pride halted him. By keeping in touch with the theatre where she was rehearsing he could probably learn the news for which his mind was restlessly avid.

He called there the next day and made inquiry. He learned that she had pleaded illness and had requested two days' absence. Face to face with the reality of the situation, his anxiety increased. Solitude became in-

superable, and he returned to the office, hoping to relieve his nervousness by concentrated application to his work.

A not entirely unexpected blow awaited him. His writings for over a month had been steadily retrograding. Two issues of the *Argonaut* had gone to press without his usual contributions, and his last article to appear had been copiously excised. His failure had meant little to him at the time. It had appeared paltry beside his greater worry. Unheedful and disinterested, he had let his duties slip by one by one. When he returned to the office it was with the resolution to reinstate himself, to wrest again from the elements of his life the power that had passed from him. But on his desk he found a summons from Dwight, and he knew that the chance for rehabilitation had gone by. West went to him and was received brusquely.

"It's no use going on," said Dwight. "I gave you warning weeks ago. You chose to ignore it. I've written your father that my patience has gone. I've kept you here longer than I would any other man I know—on his account. You had the stuff in you. You've thrown away your birthright. And for what?—A woman who doesn't care a damn about you except for what she can get out of you. When you began to go to pieces I looked around for the cause. I didn't have to go far. You used your paper—your professional honour—to give her a lift. I made allowances. You were young; and I thought she'd drop you when it was over and that you'd wake up. I've come to the conclusion I overestimated you. You probably think you love her. That's why you can't remain with us. It'll take you too long a time to get over it. In the meantime you won't be any good to anybody. I'm talking frankly to you, for some day you may break away and make something of yourself. Few men do, however, once they're caught. It's something of a personal blow to me—your father and I were very close once. But I can't sacrifice the paper to

your weakness. I've looked at the matter from every side. You've got to work out your own salvation. You don't even look the same as you did when you first came to New York. Your eyes are dull. Your mouth is down at the corners. Your gait has changed. You don't carry yourself the way you did. You're headed the wrong way, and you're going fast. My advice to you is to go back home, and to do a hell of a lot of thinking."

As Dwight was talking West's pride flared up. No man had ever spoken to him like this. His dignity was aroused, and he became angry. He started to rise and defend himself. He was no longer a boy to be scolded and chastised by strangers. His life and his actions were his own. He had the right to live as he chose. His conduct was under no one's jurisdiction. Dwight's words were an insult to his self-esteem. Then the truth of what the other man had said was borne in upon him. Why should he fight for a self-respect which had been lost? And the affair was not over. Something might happen. There yet remained the possibility of tragedy. His mind was devitalized: it still laboured under the strain of uncertainty. Courage! That was what he needed: but his energy had gone. His momentary revolt against Dwight's words did not reach articulation. He went out with an air of defeat.

It was not until two days later that West fully realized the disgrace and defeat to which the influences of his life had brought him. At the time of his dismissal from the *Argonaut* his mind was still tortured by anxiety for Margaret Moore. This anxiety had acted as a kind of armour through which Dwight's words had but incompletely penetrated. He was too preoccupied with sinister speculations as to the result of the girl's criminal action to comprehend the true meaning of the disastrous culmination of his literary work. Not until he had learned that Margaret Moore was again rehearsing, safely through the mysterious dangers that had threatened her,

did West gaze with an accurate vision upon the tragic outcome of his first battle with the great forces of life. It is not uncommon for a soldier to be mortally wounded and not know for some time that a bullet has penetrated some vital organ of his body. He may even fight on, oblivious to the fact that he already has been claimed by death. Then suddenly comes the nausea, the stifling pain: the fog drifts into his mind, and he knows the truth.

It was thus with West. Returning to his rooms after learning of Margaret Moore's safety, he fell into a chair as if he had suddenly been dealt a powerful blow. The strain of the preceding weeks had told on him physically. He had slept little. He had been living on his reserve fund of nervous vitality. His mind had been racked and shaken by the horrors of fear and the terrifying prospects of ruin. His eyes had become dull and ringed with shadows. His face was haggard. His hands had lost their repose and twitched when he worked. His mind too was less elastic: its brilliant courage had given way to a state of resignation and unconcern. His ambition had dwindled: the virile force that had always driven him into the unknown regions of intellectual conflict had for the time being ceased to exert itself. His old spirit of heresy and adventure had departed. He felt tired in both mind and body, as though suffocated by the sweet fumes of an ineffable lethargy. Life was too bitter and futile a struggle: its rewards were too meagre for the effort demanded. And moreover life seemed a treacherous task-master, ever watching for a chance to indulge itself in a bit of grim humour.

As West sat staring into the gloom of approaching night, contemplating the carnage of his murdered hopes, his first great disillusion settled upon him. It was not the disillusion he had felt toward the many isolated factors of life, but that disillusion which is inherent in life itself. The universe of reality became a monster vi-

ciously tyrannical, cruel, bitter and omnipotent—a monster against whose machinations no human effort could prove of avail. West reviewed the situation coldly. He was penniless. He was disgraced. He was bespattered with the mire of his own weakness. No other magazine would have him, even should there be an opening. His influence was gone. In the theatrical world he had ceased to exist: he could look for nothing there. The acquaintances he had formed in New York were shallow and insincere: there was no one to whom he could go for assistance. He might in time find his way into the magazines by special work, but for that he needed capital. He must have money with which to live during the tedious process of establishing himself. He was beaten, subdued, even exiled. He had set out to conquer the world, to blaze a new and dazzling trail athwart the years of his maturity. But he had been broken and cast aside by this very world he had sought to subdue.

He did not attempt to deceive himself as to the cause of his recent failure. As he thought of Margaret Moore he suffered a pang of intense shame. His mind went back to his disgrace at the University and to the cause of that catastrophe. As he compared the two women who had despoiled his dreams, they suddenly appeared as one and the same, like an enemy who had plotted against him, disappeared and then returned later, disguised, to carry out another stroke of vengeance. A quick and hot hatred of them leaped up in him. He felt that they had tricked and plundered him. A burning fury for all women seized him. He became viciously sullen. Then his passion changed to one of self-pity. An overwhelming sense of the world's wrong flooded him. His eyes burned with tears. He experienced a great and commanding desire for peace. Above all else he wanted rest—a haven free from the strife and friction of life's activities. He needed comfort and sympathy. He longed for the quiet and security of his boyhood. His

spirit was crowded with antipathy for the sordid and hectic turmoil of his recent existence. A new and devastating loneliness settled upon him—a solitude of heart as well as of mind. All the values he had attached to people and things appeared distorted and contemptible. His former deeds and attitudes disgusted him. The reaction had come suddenly, and it left him with a sense of utter fatigue.

Dwight's advice that he return to Greenwood recurred to him with fascinating persistency. He began recalling incidents of his early life at home. He visualized the green hills, the trees along the river, the white bridge in the midday sun, the large, silent rooms of his father's house. These scenes of his youth were saturated with that quietude and peace for which his soul craved. He thought of Alice Carlisle, and she seemed to be interwoven with all his early dreams. Her presence rose before him and there was a warmth immediately in his heart. A subtle sweetness arose from his vision of her. He re-enacted the intimate moments of their almost forgotten romance, and experienced again the soft thrill of her lips. He remembered her words to him when he had last seen her, and they brought comfort and a promise of rest. She seemed to hold out to him the realization of all he had missed in other women. How different she was! He felt a great longing to be near her, to feel her hands on his hair, to rest his head against her breast. There was no sexual passion in his desire, no hot yearning for the touch of her flesh. He wanted only to be close to her, in silence, to feel the security of her mothering tenderness. West felt that he had unexpectedly surprised some secret of his nature. Irene Brenner and Margaret Moore had been but fantastic and tragic incidents in his life. He had never loved either of them. They had blinded him to the truth. They had inflamed his blood and defrauded him. They had taken the best from him and gone their way. And he had been disloyal

to himself and to the girl whose love had first awakened him and followed him throughout the years of his degradation.

That night he wrote to Alice Carlisle: "For hours I have sat in the darkness reviewing the sordid pageant of the last six years. I have spared myself nothing. I have been honest with myself for perhaps the first time in my life. I know the extent of my baseness. My shame is complete, my sorrow overpowering. I have looked into my soul with wide and unflinching eyes. For years I have cheated myself of all that was decent and clean. There is nothing I can bring forth in extenuation. The facts are too glaring, too hideous to be disguised by sophistries. I have been weak and unworthy. I have played the coward's part, deceived by the tinsel which I mistook for the gold of youth. For years I have set aside all that was noblest within me. To-night I awoke from the degraded dream which has so long enslaved me. The truth has staggered me and filled me with a vanquishing remorse. I have sullied all the ideals that bound my hopes to great things. I am worn out, repentant, and filled with a profound sadness. I yearn for those things from which I have been divorced by my own blindness and impotency. I know now that I have strayed from the cleaner facts of my nature, and before I tell you the desire that has taken hold of me and whose fulfilment means my regeneration, I want you to know all that I know. You must be able to look into my heart and read every word of its sordid story. Then if you can believe me and will try to forgive me, there will be no ghosts of deceit to torture me in the years to come. I will put it all brutally, truthfully: nothing shall be glossed over.

"When I went from you years ago I loved you. At the University a new life, with new faces and interests, turned my heart away from you. I was caught in the current of my instincts which had been liberated by my change of environment. I met many girls—girls of the

street, the world's castaways. I paid them their price and took what they had to give. Later I imagined I had fallen in love, and for two years I lived with a girl. I failed because of my weakness for her, because I was not strong enough to overcome my infatuation. I arose from the muck of that affair, but when I came to New York, I once more sank down into the depths. Again I imagined myself in love. I laid the best of me upon another woman's altar. A sordid year passed—a year of misfortune and degradation. I forgot that life had its exaltations. I let my work drift. I sold my decent dreams for the spurious rewards of debauch. The girl was to have a child, and I even abetted her in circumventing motherhood. I have been discharged from my paper. I am alone, disgraced, desolate, fouled with the mud of my soul's corruption.

"But out of the mess I have made of my life one fact arises—a fact which for years has remained hidden. And somehow that fact is the only thing that holds me to the future. It has been with me always, submerged in the recesses of my heart. It is this: I love you—I have always loved you, and I shall love you eternally. That I ever should have thought otherwise only proves how far I have drifted from the truth. But to-night I know that your love has been the one great steadfast circumstance of my manhood. I have seen the meanness and shallowness of other loves—their transiency and their unworthiness. That knowledge I have paid for dearly, but since it has brought me a realization of the truth and given back to me the wonder of my love for you, I shall not count the cost. That which I want now above everything is your compassion and forgiveness. I have nothing to offer you. I am broken and defeated; and yet if I might come to you and know that you understood, it would give me courage and strength. You alone can salvage the wreck of my life. I need your faith in me. I need the peace and the comfort that only you can give

me. I feel that I am pleading with you for my very existence. But my love for you is the one reality that has clung to me. All else in the world is meaningless. Let me come back to you. Let me prove to you that I am still able to conquer. Help me find once more those magic lost dreams of our days together."

XX

THE following May Stanford West married Alice Carlisle. There had been no hesitancy on her part in forgiving him. She had written him immediately a long tender letter of the kind he might have expected from his mother. It contained the first evidences of her maturity. It was calm and generous, a little wistful also, as if her heart was on the point of breaking and yet as if she were glad of her sorrow because it carried with it its own balm and compensation. Her letter said that she knew and had always known he would some day come back to her, because he was not wholly bad, but had merely been temporarily weak. Her love was big enough, she wrote, to blot out the past—so big, in fact, that she could again take him in her arms and look upon him with the same peace of mind as when he had gone from her years ago.

Something in her words gave West the impression that she was actually glad he had been broken by the world and had sought refuge in her love. There was a veiled pride in her magnanimity. Had her attitude been carried a degree further it would have bordered on condescension. Hitherto she had leaned upon him dependently. She had accepted life more or less at his valuation. She had subjugated herself to the positivity of his nature. In thought and action he had dominated her quietly and subtly; and she had moulded herself to the dictates of his strength. Her attitude toward him had always been in a measure subservient. In his presence she had exhibited a natural and complacent humility. She had looked up to him admiringly, taking colour from his ideas.

In her letter all this had changed, not openly, perhaps

not even consciously; but her instinct of submission and service had given way to one of maternalism and ownership. The idol to whom she had heretofore had to lift her eyes now lay at her feet, and she alone could reinstate it. She was the one who must give: he was the recipient. It was he who needed her. This first confession of his weakness awoke in her a new point of view. It took from her the last vestige of her girlhood, and filled her with a sense of responsibility she had never before experienced. There were passages of hope and encouragement in her letter, and she had written them with a novel feeling of surety in his love. For this sense of power and confidence she was more than willing to accept the sorrow which accompanied it. The memories of his faithlessness became intimate and cherished factors of her life.

West had returned to her at once. Before he had reached her the lassitude of his physical reaction had passed, and he was angry with himself for having written to her as he did. Even his remorse had disappeared with the passing of his mental fatigue, and he was ashamed at having laid bare the mood of his depression. His spiritual strength had returned. He wondered how he could have attached so much importance to his failure. It was not as if he had been older; he was indeed incredibly young. There were years ahead of him in which to recuperate. As he looked back over his life even the regrets he had harboured vanished from his mind. His experiences had taught him much. To be sure, he had lost a great deal, but had he not gained also? When he asked himself if he would be willing to go back and eliminate both Irene Brenner and Margaret Moore from the scheme of his existence, he hesitated; and in that moment of speculation he realized that, although he would gladly have changed somewhat the course of his past life, he would not willingly have forgone it utterly. Even the horror of Margaret Moore's days of pregnancy had

been a salutary experience. He had paid a high price, but he had gained a deeper and truer knowledge of the world.

Therefore when he had stood face to face with Alice Carlisle he was ashamed of the intellectual cowardice which had led him into approaching her with so abject a contrition. He was not ashamed of his past actions but of his attitude toward them. He resented his words to her, just as he had felt an unpleasant sensation in reading her answer. She, on seeing him, misunderstood his humiliation, and in her efforts to comfort him she only emphasized his mortification. He was in no frame of mind to be patronized, for the pendulum of his self-confidence had again swung far forward. He was not offended, however, at the girl's gentleness. The very error of her judgment increased his sympathy and love for her. At times he smiled inwardly at her earnest manner which was calculated to relieve his mind of its burden. Her sweetness, her kindness, her unselfishness, formed a violent contrast to the attributes of the other women he had known, and his desire to marry her was as strong as it had been on the night he had turned to her from the sodden wreckage of his New York experience. The lethargy of sex was still upon him.

A new atmosphere hung over his home on his return. His mother had been openly reproachful, but beneath her disapprobation West detected the pride of victory. He had not followed her advice or succumbed to her wishes, and he had finally been driven back to her by his inability to make good his revolt. By no word or action did she directly indicate this patent fact, but that she was constantly aware of it and gloried in it was evident in her silences as well as in her words of reproval. Despite her love for him West was never without a feeling of guilt when in her presence. His father chose to ignore the episode, and avoided mentioning either his son's work or plans for the future. In each other's presence there

existed, nevertheless, the consciousness of the affair. Notwithstanding that on the surface things assumed a conventional mien, there were undercurrents, subtle and insidious, which gave to West's life a decided tinge of unpleasantness.

Although neither his mother nor father interfered to any great extent with his decision to marry Alice Carlisle, it became obvious to West that they no longer regarded such an alliance with approval. Their objections had to do with the circumstances surrounding it. West was penniless and had disgraced himself. Alice Carlisle had inherited a small fortune from her father, and it was on this that the young people would have to live until such a time as West should establish himself. The girl had been the one to suggest it, and, despite her willingness to contribute to their support, West's parents could not reconcile the arrangement with their social ideas. Again, they had lost confidence in their son and feared for Alice Carlisle's future happiness. They believed he should wait until he had his success well in hand before entering into a partnership where both would suffer for the failures of the one. Stanford West's answers to his father's tentative suggestions only increased the older man's fears. The date for the marriage had been set, and when Joseph West saw that remonstrance was futile, he accepted the forthcoming event with the same quiet acquiescence which had characterized his attitude toward all of his son's head-strong decisions.

Stanford West did not share his parents' scruples about taking Alice Carlisle's money. Even had he been disinclined to accept her inheritance, she would have overcome his chivalry. In fact, she forestalled any sensitiveness he might have displayed by insisting constantly on the absolute oneness of their possessions as well as their interests. Her new feeling of ownership dictated this insistence. She had become suddenly jealous of all other influences in his life. She desired to be all things

to him; and for the first time she experienced an antagonism toward his mother, a mild and half-formulated resentment toward the older woman's intimate relations with her son. Since West had been defeated he had become in her eyes a child in need of care and protection, and she felt that the prerogative of comforting him was hers alone. That part of her earlier love for him which had been admiration had now turned to pity, and it had brought to her an emotion far more personal and fundamental than her former sentiment. She was secretly glad that it was in her power to give him a chance to rehabilitate himself, and when she had insisted on his receiving her money as if it had been his own, she was guided by a deep instinct of protective service. His acceptance made her feel that she had won an unassailable and complete victory over those elements in his life which questioned her single and entire possession of him. It insured his total dependence on her: it closed up every means whereby he might escape the toils of her love.

West, in turn, regarding the matter from the selfish vantage ground of his own career, saw in it the answer to his problems concerning the future. He looked upon Alice Carlisle's love and the advantages that went with it as a propitious combination of circumstances set in his path by the benevolent powers which controlled his destiny. There was little doubt in his mind that he loved the girl, although his emotion for her was not a passionate and consuming desire such as he had possessed for other women. He was not inclined to regret this latter fact. His experience had made him suspicious of the genuineness of brisk and heated affections; and he accepted his emotions toward Alice Carlisle as the indicators of a sane and lasting love.

She answered to the impelling needs of his present mental condition, and it was with the calm of perfect contentment that he visualized her love following him throughout the years of his future. Her sympathy in

his work was genuine and spontaneous. She had no interests save those he brought into her life. Her nature was simple and direct, yet not commonplace, for her mind operated on a higher plane than that of the average woman. It was quick and receptive, eager and impressionable. It was not cluttered with the narrow and conventional ideals which one might expect in a girl of her upbringing. West did not fear restraining influences such as were exerted on him by his mother. He felt that he could dominate Alice Carlisle in case of intellectual dissension. Her personality was negative; but it was not the negation of weakness: it was a negation which functioned and took its place as an important factor in the world's sexual polarity, a negation which complimented his positiveness.

The instinct to become settled was now uppermost in West's being. The buffetings the world had given him made him long for the serenity of a permanent anchorage. He wanted quiet and peace in which to give birth to the ideas which clamoured for expression. These were the things Alice Carlisle held out to him. With her he would be wholly free to follow the path of his aspirations. Even the necessity of supporting himself was eliminated. There would be no need of concessions to the demands of editors and publishers, for compromises with his inner ambitions. There was enough money for many years of comfort. By the time it was gone he would be well on the great highway to exalted consummation. Perhaps even by then recognition would have come to him, although he counted little on this. It would take the world many years to come abreast of his ideals. But he had no fear for his future now. The introductory years of struggle and misunderstanding, of obloquy and condemnation, were provided for. Fate had been kind to him. Already he felt the thrill of high achievement, the intoxication of strenuous conquest.

The months preceding his marriage were peaceful

ones. Each day perceptibly diminished the impression made on him by the feverish activities of his past life. It was as if he had suddenly emerged from a gigantic factory loud with the clatter of mysterious machinery, into the restful quietude of out-of-doors. His years both at the University and in New York were but confusion, a turbulence which had fallen upon his youth. That was all over now. Not even a sense of their reality lingered. They might have been a dream so far as they affected him personally. A new life of far-reaching opportunities had come to him—a life of security, of silent labour, of physical ease and mental elation. All winter a great calm lay on his soul. He had no desire to go forth and battle with the elements of existence. Life lay submissive at his feet. The easy-going habits of mind that had been his during the first months of his romance with Alice Carlisle returned. When he was not with her now he read, or dreamed of the smooth upward course the coming years were to take. He was in no haste. There were no obstacles to interfere with his development. His triumph seemed inevitable. A divine tolerance toward all things pervaded him.

Spring came early. West watched the new green creep into the hills and across the fields. There was no sadness or regret in this springtime as there had been in past years. How far away was his boyhood with its memories of other vernal rebirths among these familiar scenes! How changed was the spirit of the hills! One day he walked far down the river until he was opposite the island where he had first told his love to Alice Carlisle. How young he had been! How old he was now! He thought of the girl as she had looked then in the cold twilight. The years had changed her greatly. A womanly dignity had come to her. The gold of her hair had darkened. Her eyes were calmer. To West she appeared more desirable as a woman than as a girl. Was she indeed not more competent and dependable? He did

not ask himself why he should have demanded these traits in her. Formerly they would have militated against her. Her very weakness and dependence had once touched him deeply and made him more conscious of his power. He was happy now to lean upon the strength of her love. But he did not question the change in himself. His contentment was too profound to permit of self-analysis. Nor did he even attempt to trace the true source of that contentment. For the time being he was willing to forgo all but the placid reality of the present.

His wedding was simple and quiet. Seminoff had come to Greenwood at West's request. He was more silent than was his custom and talked little of West's future even when the latter urged it upon him. In response to direct questions he was politely evasive as if the subject was distasteful to him. At the first opportunity he departed, pleading pressing duties. West was grieved at the episode. There had been a silent accusation in Seminoff's manner. The bond between these two seemed to have lost its intimacy: a note of formality had entered into their relationship. Seminoff's restraint filled West with speculations. He felt a sudden longing for the close and frank fellowship of their former days together. The status of that fellowship took on a pronounced importance, and it was with a sensation of having lost something valuable and consequential that he turned to the details of his new life.

This feeling would not quit his mind. Once when he caught sight of Alice Carlisle, now his wife, busying herself with his affairs, he silently blamed her for taking his friend from him. He realized her incapacity to fill the void left by Seminoff's departure. Intellectually she could not give him that which appeared to have passed from his life. He had not considered this point before. His mind during the past month had been too concentrated on his material welfare, on the opportunities af-

forded him by his new venture. A loneliness seized him, a sense of isolation, a conviction that, though life had given him much, it had at the same time demanded a requisite compensation. Even his wife's gentleness and love failed to balance this new weight of solitude. She gratified only one side of his nature. When he held her in his arms and felt how completely he filled every desire of her heart and mind, he was more than ever impressed with his loneliness. Only in small degree did she quench the thirst of his intellect; and that small part of her which overlapped his brain intensified his craving for masculine intercourse.

And now he was not free to go from her and seek the companionships of his desire. He thought back to the summer Seminoff and he had passed in their lonely camp. He pictured Alice Carlisle as his sole companion on such an adventure and experienced simultaneously a feeling of incompleteness due to her inadequacy to meet his mental demands. The day after their marriage they walked into the hills along the path they had taken on their first meeting. Even the spell of the out-of-doors had vanished. West was silent a long time speculating on the subtle change that had come over him. . . . Freedom: that was what had gone from him. He was no longer the arbitrary dictator of his actions. A responsibility to another had impeded the prodigal play of his instincts. He was bound down by obligations, by duties, by the necessity of considering the consequences of his acts. These restrictions were not tangible. He could not put his finger on any point where they obtruded on his impulses. He had not encountered any situation where he was compelled to make a deliberate choice between his free-will and the prescriptions of his new environment. But he was conscious of the presence of some influence whose roots were outside himself—an influence which, when the time came, would exert itself against him. He was like a man strapped to a chair, who, though

at the moment he had no inclination to arise, knew he would never be able to. Perhaps, even, he would never desire to arise: nevertheless he was aware of the fact of his bondage.

West could not locate any of the specific evidences of his subjugation. He could bring no direct accusation against the girl he had married. She loved him too devotedly to stand deliberately in the way of his desires. Her one concern in life was his happiness. To this end she was willing to sacrifice everything. She was convinced of his ability to rise to greatness, and she was prepared to assist him to her utmost in attaining to it. She knew he was unusual: in so far as she was able to cope with his superiority, she appreciated him. She believed she could help him. Her sympathy was large, and she had no ambitions other than those embodied in him and his work. When he told her of the clashes between his ideals and those of his mother, she glowed with an inward pride, for she told herself she could see far beyond the confines of the other woman's narrow vision. She did not wish West to sacrifice himself to the College at Greenwood. He was formed for better and larger things. She thought of the world's great men: she had read their books; and she was confident that some day her husband would sit in their company. This belief of hers amounted almost to a passion. All he needed was encouragement and understanding. These she would bring to him; and he would appreciate them, and his way would, therefore, be made easier.

Against the wishes of his parents West had determined to settle in London. He believed he would find there a greater intellectual freedom, a more comprehensive understanding of the things he was to strive for. He had few affinities with his own country. It was too young to be satisfying as a *milieu* for his cultural ideals. The splendid tradition of English letters appealed to him as a more congenial bed for the fructification of his

work. England's literary past was full of the glories of antiquity. An atmosphere of profounder cultivation surrounded the lives of writers. There he would find men nearer his own stature. There too he would find a keener interest in æsthetics. The refinements of an old and, in many ways, admirable civilization still influenced the nation's productiveness. England's heritage still had the power to inspire those who chose to put themselves in its keeping.

West was not searching for the beaten paths of old; but he knew that, if he was to ascend to the greatest heights, he must build on the foundation of knowledge and aspiration laid by the Titans of the past. There was no cultural past in America; and he was lured by the exalted names and deeds in the history of English letters. The game of authorship was a serious affair in England. There it possessed dignity, even grandeur. It was not a plaything, an imitative craft designed for amusement, as in America. There were many journals given over to its consideration. There were critics versed in its purposes and procedure, critics of lofty and scholarly attainments. Eagerly his mind turned toward London, toward the men who were struggling for new and vital expression, toward the intelligent hospitality which a body of the younger authors held out to heretical ideas and valiant hopes. The first efforts of these men had even now begun to invade the sacred academism of the older schools. Their exact tendencies were not determinable as yet, but there was already a proclaimed dissatisfaction with the old, a striking out into uncharted waters, a straining toward a new vitality. This activity West considered as indicative of a modern Renaissance, a flowering of seeds after a century of intense germination. It was the demand of youth to be heard, a shaking up of the bones of the older gods, a destruction of ancient idols. The energy of it, that which it promised, appealed to him. He believed it would pave the way to dauntless

and unrestricted expression, that out of the upheaval majestic achievements, august ideas, a nobler culture, would evolve. He read into these signs his own hopes for another Golden Age, for a passionate recrudescence of the creative will. He wished to be there fighting in the vortex. He wanted to be part of this colossal reaction against the senility and the romantic decay of the Victorians.

Other things influenced in minor degree his ambition to live in London. There were relatives of his mother who held influential positions in that city and who had expressed a desire to have him visit them. Antony Andersen, with whom he had kept in communication, was now connected with one of the largest London art publications. And two of Alice Carlisle's most intimate girl friends—acquaintances of her school days—were married and living in a London suburb. They had established a sane and somewhat enviable social position for themselves, and West felt that their affection for his wife would eliminate the loneliness which would have been sure to settle on her had she entered London without attachments. He would not be utterly alone in a strange country. Andersen, he knew, would initiate him into the secrets and bypaths of the literary field: and there was already the nucleus of a social life which would occupy his wife's hours when he was busy with his labours. He regarded his voluntary expatriation with anticipatory satisfaction. Again the lines of his life had been cast advantageously.

XXI

Stanford West's first serious intellectual shock came when he met and talked with the men who had instigated the new movement in English letters. He had been in London for over a year, planning his work, making copious notes, co-ordinating the material he had at hand, attuning himself, through reading and research, to the spirit he longed to express. He had given little time or attention to contemporaneous letters. He had made no inquiry into the motives or qualifications of the men who were attempting to break through the crust of tradition. Evidences of their activities were on all sides. The conservative and academic press paused occasionally to ridicule them or to utter a warning against their doctrines. West was conscious of the effects of their work. He had not looked into the causes of their heterodoxy, for he was not yet ready to throw himself into the fray. Through Andersen he had met casually many of the younger men, had heard them talk in generalities, had felt the impetus of their revolutionary candour. He had seen copies of one or two independent reviews, and the ardour and youth of them had appealed to him. He believed that a forum was being established for the propagation of intrepid ideas, and he prepared himself for the day when he would take a hand.

But before that day arrived he came into more intimate contact with the minds and motivating beliefs which had set the wheels of reaction in motion. The experience left him with much the same feeling of isolation and disappointment that had followed his first intellectual grappling with the student body at the University. The

whole revolt was superficial and spurious. Basically it was banal. It was implanted in no sound foundation of culture and aristocracy. And in itself it was as narrow as the idealism against which it was aimed. Its modernity and novelty were largely matters of diction. Stripped of its terminological integuments it was commonplace, even obvious. It was in direct opposition to the classic viewpoint. At bottom it was socialistic. It apotheosized ignorance: it made a fetich of mediocre aspirations. It contained no purity in the educational sense. Its animating force was cleverness, not profundity. It drew no line of demarcation between the high and the low. In fact, those very constituents of traditional learning which had retained the elements of ancient nobility were assailed with a dogmatism far denser than the dogmatism sought to be wiped out. It was the philosophy of the man in the street given scandalous articulation. It derided the prejudices and sentimentalities of the middle classes—qualities necessary to complement the demands of an exalted aristocratic existence—with a prejudice and sentimentality which had no place in any social scheme save a communistic one. Two of the leaders of the new revolt were professed socialists, busy with the work of reform, expending their energies in dialectic and statistical pamphleteering. These men were not high thinkers fighting for a rejuvenescence of noble ideals, but sharp-witted and fearless doctrinaires striving to establish a social order which would make impossible a ruling intellectual class, which would put a premium on the mediocre intellect, which would absorb and nullify all effort to arise above the wallow of a congenial and comfortable philosophy, and which would destroy automatically the exceptional creator. Their philippics and sarcasm were hurled at the established social institutions, at religion, law, order, marriage, commercialism—all those factors on which the great man should build and rise to rarer heights. Even science, because it implied intellec-

tual specialization out of reach of the ignorant man, was attacked viciously. Art itself was held in contempt because it demanded for appreciation an æsthetic superiority to which the average man could not attain.

Nor was there among these young iconoclasts a chance for individual ideas. They were all held together by a common socialistic attitude. They were working not for mental liberation, but for the inculcation of their specific doctrines, for a more stringent and comprehensive servitude of thought. The first books of a great German thinker had just made their appearance in translation. They were denounced bitterly as being opposed to the principles of the new school. West was filled with mingled amazement and disappointment. These men, who he had hoped would open the door to his heresies, became at once a dangerous and influential obstacle in the way of the books he had planned. But they did not wholly dishearten him. Surely there must be other men in England capable of recognizing the purity of his ambitions. Sooner or later he was sure to find them. He returned to his work saddened and burdened with solitude. He reproached himself for expecting to meet with sympathy. His path was a difficult one, but he did not fear to follow it.

During her first year in London Alice West was busy establishing herself. She had made many friends. She had gathered about her an increasing circle of admirers, and her afternoons and evenings were filled with social pleasures and relaxations. There were always invitations to small affairs, theatre parties, concerts, dinners and drives. To this life West himself had contributed much. His ability to take the lead and hold it, his ingratiating personality, his learning and broad interests, his instinct for play—these qualities made him a valuable and desirable member of formal and informal gatherings. Alice West too was possessed of a competent and pleasing manner which went far to solidify her position in

the circle in which she moved. Her physical charm, which amounted almost to beauty, was an added force to her attractiveness. West encouraged her desire to form a coterie of friends. He did not fear for their influence upon her. She was of too serious a nature to place these outside interests before his work and welfare. And again, the people with whom she associated were not of the type that placed too great an insistence upon the social phase of life. Many of them were occupied in intellectual pursuits. Some were connected with governmental and diplomatic posts. Their breeding was genuine; their position in both public and private life, assured. A certain gravity of purpose lay beneath their outlook. Their social diversions were eclectic, the normal recreations of busy and important careers, and possessed that touch of informality that attested to spontaneity and belied any accusation of snobbery. It was not a wealthy, inactive class from which they came, but a comfortable, well-bred, educated stratum of gentle people whose instincts, tastes and pursuits dictated their selection of associates.

Despite his many distractions and his absorption in his work, West could not shake himself free from the solitude which permeated his conscious hours. There were days when the lust of adventure was upon him, when the comfort and security of his home life palled. Had he been alone, unrestricted by conventional obligations, he would have gone away into the quiet places of Europe, living carelessly as his mood moved him—a rover in mind and body. He dreamed of sturdy companionships among the world's intellectual outcasts, of a spiritual vagabondage in which to-morrow could not be foreseen, and in which the elements of chance and danger would enter. His old desire to battle with life for what he should gain from it animated him and made him chafe beneath the suavity and regularity of his present existence. During such periods of discontent he questioned the wisdom

of his marriage and appraised his wife with sure and impartial judgment. His whole youth had been a struggle against those influences which would have forced him into a groove; and in his effort to escape the stagnation of routine he had plunged himself into another groove from which he was helpless to extricate himself. Had his early misdemeanours and failures not been greatly exaggerated by him? Were the fruits of his weakness as great as he had imagined? He asked himself if he could not have succeeded alone. Could he not have overcome single-handed the handicap of his younger years?

There were times when such speculations made him silent and irritable. And yet he had no basis for complaint against his wife. She was tender and affectionate. She made no demands on him. During his hours of despondency she did not obtrude herself. She met his silences with silence. She did not question him or combat his decisions despite their occasional whimsicality and unreasonableness. She loved him with an unselfish and intelligent love, and waited patiently and trustfully for the day when he should do great things. Withal West could not disabuse himself of the belief that a false step had been taken, that there were strong and invisible chemicals in his life that were subtly altering the composition of his nature and poisoning the alkaloids of his mind. For weeks at a time the instinct for achievement deserted him, and he would become partially convinced of the futility of brave and painful action. His own ideas failed to interest him: their vigour and daring lost significance. His contempt for current inanities of thought moderated; and for months he let his life drift by on the tide of disinterestedness. The incentive to effort was temporarily quiescent.

During his second year in London he met the editor of a virile and independent weekly. The man was the first he had talked with in England who idealized freedom

in the abstract. His publication, a healthy counterblast to the insipidities of the now almost defunct *fin de siècle* movement, was being violently attacked on the one hand by the old school and on the other hand by the superficial modernists who were prating of the meaninglessness of art and upholding the standard of a vitiated æstheticism. The cry of immorality had gone up from all traditional quarters, and the weekly was in disrepute except among its limited following. Its contributors were new men, and because they had no obligations to discharge to an outraged public they threw down the bars of their enthusiasm with a recklessness of which only vigorous and repressed youth is capable. The editor's personality was a strong one, and West felt his old ambition rush back into his mind. The man who had brought about this change in him was not profound; his convictions were not based on fundamental precepts; but he had a breadth of vision and a tolerance which admirably equipped him as a leader. West cared little for the opinion in which his review was held by the established and conservative critics, and announced his desire to lend a hand in the fight. Before these two parted he had agreed to furnish the weekly with a series of articles.

West went to work with an energy and *élan* born of long abstinence. He looked upon the publication of these articles as the first important step of his public career. They would be the opening wedge for all that was to follow in their wake. They would establish his stand and indicate to his contemporaries that which they should expect from him later. After their appearance his name would not be unknown, for despite the animosity and contempt which greeted each issue of the weekly, every one vitally interested in the march of literary ideals familiarized himself with its contents. West wrote with passionate fervour, bravely and vindictively. All his pent-up convictions and ideas surged to the surface and were welded into a consistent and logical ensemble by

his craftsmanship. He knew how to write. His schooling had given him power, and he handled his means as if they had been as plastic a medium as putty. He thought lucidly and boldly. He was caught in the tumultuous fire of revolt. He planned his articles to cover the whole field of his philosophy. They formed an outlined statement of the system of æsthetic and intellectual culture of which he had long dreamed. They were critical as well as expositional. They set a new standard of mental attainment; and while they did not openly attack the prevailing systems of thought, they had the effect of ridiculing and opposing the basic postulates of the new movement.

West made no compromise either in statement or diction. He was cold and unsentimental. He attacked ruthlessly the very structure on which modern education, morality and art were based. He insisted upon a natural aristocracy wherein there would be no concessions to the demands of illiteracy. One of his papers dealt specifically with English methods of education, and he put forward a series of radical reforms in which the democratic idea was not included. Another paper outlined an æsthetic *rationale* for criticism wherein morality and ethics played no part. In still another paper he analysed modern moral institutions, denouncing them as the greatest enemies of all worthy aspiration, as the most effective impediment in the path of a pure culture. He censured the most sacred aspects of Western civilization, pointing out their deleterious effects of the development of the æsthetic will.

West himself did not know the extent of his heresies. They were more constitutionally revolutionary than those any other modern man had dared utter. They stripped the illusion and the sanctity from the whole fabric of life and replaced them with doctrines which superficially seemed to reverse the accepted moral code. West addressed himself to the few, not deeming that the

general reader would interpret his advocacies literally. He wrote from the standpoint of the superior man, directing his statements to the leaders and moulders of modern thought.

The editor of the weekly read the articles unemotionally. When he had finished he sat back frowning with indecision. West cared little for his personal opinion, except in so far as it might influence his acceptance or rejection of the work.

"I don't agree with you," he remarked at length. "Yet I won't deny the power of your point of view. Your appeal is for an aristocratic minority, for the elevation of art and letters above any possible comprehension by the masses. You ignore the potentialities of greatness in the common people. You would sacrifice the whole of society for the benefit of the few fortunate ones. You imply two standards of conduct—an obvious injustice. You reject equality which is the very foundation of all human enterprise. From the conventional standpoint you uphold—even urge—a vicious immorality." He regarded West critically. "You advocate the one thing which will shock and horrify the public more than anything else you could have written. . . . Are you prepared to take the consequences?"

The articles were featured. They were run in bold type and leaded. They could escape the eye of no one who glanced through the weekly's pages. Their effect was electric and instantaneous. They were criticized almost entirely on moral grounds. There was scarcely a well-known critical organ in London which did not attack him. West's bitterest detractors were the younger men from whom he had originally expected intelligent sympathy. The older academic publications denounced him as an enemy to all decency and order, and there were papers which stooped to personal incrimination. Had the articles been less competently and resourcefully presented they would have been received with less gravity.

They might have been dismissed as youthful attempts to startle. But no such attitude was possible under the circumstances. They attested to too capable and broad an erudition. They were too clear and self-confident, too able in their knowledge of history and the psychology of human endeavour. They possessed a brilliance which went beneath the surface, a logic which penetrated to hidden causes. The charge of ignorance or callowness could not be brought against them. They were rife with learning, with an understanding of ancient and modern philosophy. And they were written with a scholarly exactness and a sense of dictional values which revealed deep comprehension of the mechanics of speech and literary form. On their physical and academic side there was no foothold for refutation. As a consequence they were approached from the angle of their immorality and perversion.

West was not displeased with their reception. At all events he had been given a serious hearing. The very venom of the replies indicated a respect for his ability. The battle was on, and his head was high with the confidence of eventual victory. He felt stronger because of his enemies. His spirits rose like a gigantic wave and bore him into the future. His eyes sparkled with the anticipation of stirring conquests. The adventure of life stimulated him to a degree he had not previously known. He was fired with a new virility—a virility born of struggle and suffering, which is the sign of one's great love of living. Resolute faith, the power of affirmation, initiative, pride, courage and fearlessness—these would be the rewards in the exercise of his convictions. The strength of great striving and the vitality of great deeds, as well as the assurance of rare and vigorous growth, lay within the course he was to follow. The future held in store for him a life of beauty and plenitude, of strength and exuberance.

During the weeks when his articles were appearing

and the criticisms against him were being launched, West noticed that his wife was more silent and less inclined to gaiety than during any of the time she had been in London. At table she seemed preoccupied. When she smiled West was conscious of a certain effort on her part to participate in the froth of their trivial intercourse. At times he could detect a sadness in her eyes which recalled the sombreness of his mother when he had rebelled against her desires. She had spoken little of his articles; but he did not ascribe her temporary lack of interest to any material outside force, for she had lost much enthusiasm for her social recreations as well. She had cancelled several engagements, pleading a slight illness.

West paid small attention to her indisposition. He regarded it as a passing depression, as only a mood perhaps, and did not comment upon it. Even when it became obvious that something was weighing on her mind and robbing her of her spontaneity, he merely treated her with unusual tenderness and busied himself in his work. It was probably some intimate memory which had come back to her—some atmosphere of the past which a dream had revived; and he decided to let it run its course and fade again into the grave from which it had risen. Were it of any moment she would have come to him voluntarily and sought his comfort, he argued; and so the days went by without his demanding to know the cause of her despondency.

But one day shortly after the last of his articles had appeared, he told her of his intention to elaborate them for book publication. She did not answer him, but he felt her eyes upon him, and looked up. On her face was an expression of sorrow and resignation—the same expression he had surprised there to a lesser degree on other recent occasions. In that moment he realized that her silent melancholy during the past weeks was in some way associated with his writings. Up to that time

he had overlooked her possible point of view in regard to the denunciations which had been heaped upon him. She had suffered because of what she had read about him —that was it. His first feeling now was one of irritation at her unwarrantable sensitiveness; but, when he thought of what she might be suffering, his irritation changed to a mild pity. He took one of her hands in both of his.

"Have you minded what has been said of me?" he asked. "What difference can it make to us? It is only part of the battle. You mustn't take such matters personally."

She was silent and looked away. His words had not touched her; and West knew that something much deeper than he had imagined had brought about her sorrow.

"Don't you want to tell me why you're unhappy?" he asked after a pause.

She turned to him and studied him closely as if trying to read in his eyes the answer to an enigma.

"I can't explain it entirely, dear," she answered in a low, distressed voice. "And I don't want to interfere in anything you do. I want to go with you and stand by you in everything. I never want you to feel that I ever tried to thwart you. . . . And yet I can't adjust my mind to seeing the wisdom—the truth, perhaps—of what you have written. . . . I'd go to the ends of the earth, suffer isolation and ostracism, if I thought it would help you in fulfilling your ideals. . . . But I want to be sure that *you*—deep down in your heart—are sure of yourself, of your beliefs, of the things you write."

West, for the first time since his marriage, felt the approach of the hidden tyranny of his wife's love. Associatively it brought back certain bitter events in his boyhood when his mother had reproved him gently and lovingly for his early compositions.

"Don't be angry with me, dear," Alice West con-

tinued. "It's because I love you, because your ambitions mean so much to me, that I feel as I do." (How like his mother, this appeal of love and unselfishness!) "No one in the world believes in you as deeply and wholly as I do. No one recognizes as I do your wonderful gifts, your wonderful talent—the promise that's in you. . . . I know what you can do—how great you can become. . . . It's not a foolish, blind belief, but a knowledge that nothing can ever take away from me. Some day I'll be so proud of you, so happy at your success, when the whole world will honour and acclaim you . . . when my husband—my little boy—will be as great as the greatest."

Her words gave West a distinct shock. He suddenly realized that they were the first definite statement of her standard of worth. They were the first revelation he had had of her point of view. He remembered now that all her previous talk of his work and his future had been in general terms. She had never given concise articulation to the criterion by which she judged his possibilities. He had been in a darkened room, so far as she was concerned, and had imagined it was spacious, with walls which stretched to infinite distances. But her words now had flooded the room with light, and its dimensions were meagre. He felt an atmosphere of suffocation about him. "As great as the greatest." Her standard, after all, was the world's standard. She measured his future greatness by that of other men whose works she knew, by the successful academic men of established positions, the world's successes. "When the whole world will honour you and acclaim you." Greatness to her, then, meant recognition by conventional leaders. It implied acclamation and honour by the educated. It was the greatness of compromise, of conservative achievement. The radical and the new had no place in her conception of exalted attainment. The explorer of new fields, the solitary experimenter, the adventurer in untrodden regions, the blazer of new trails, were beyond the range of her

appraisement. She did not penetrate beyond the boundaries of the every-day cycle of life. Materialism, not idealism, delimited the projection of her mind. The solidity of settled value was the foundation of her appreciations. She wanted him to be great according to her interpretation of the word; and that interpretation was influenced and governed by prevailing precedent, by her conception of power which at bottom was the power of permanence. She had no other standard of judgment save that of the life she knew. The very definition of the adjectives she applied to him were garnered from the lexicon of realistic existence.

West understood the hidden psychology of her words. He understood also his feeling of incompleteness when he had imagined her supplanting Seminoff. He was not angered at her so much as he was discouraged. Her attitude filled him with hopelessness. It restricted his full freedom, not directly and palpably, but quietly and insidiously, like a blemish in the blood. She loved him too much to make him unhappy by open interference. Had she not withheld from him all criticism during the past weeks? But his consciousness of her opinions would interfere with the automatism of his expression. His love for her would ever keep that consciousness alive, and arouse his sympathy for the sorrow his writings were sure to produce in her. He felt he would never succumb to the limitations of her judgments and appreciations; but nevertheless his life seemed to have been suddenly invaded by a powerful detractory force, by a tragedy which would follow him throughout all his remaining years, like the loss of a limb, or blindness, or an incurable disease.

She saw the look of distress and discontent her words had caused him and tried to arouse him to a realization of the justness of her feelings.

"Don't you see, dear," she went on, "that everyone will misjudge you for openly advocating the things you

do? . . . By antagonizing everyone you are throwing away your chances for true recognition. You're only making enemies for yourself by deliberately flying in the face of everything the world holds sacred. . . . Some day you'll regret it—you're so young now—and then it will be too late. . . . You can't really believe all the things you say, but the world does not understand that. It breaks my heart to see you using your splendid talents to injure yourself. I don't want you to write popular things—you know that. There's nothing you can't do if you want to . . . but you'll never know how it hurts me to read and hear the things that are said about you, knowing as I do that they're false and unjust. Even some of the people we know have expressed their regrets to me. . . . Dear, I've almost been ashamed to meet our friends lately—I'm afraid that even they won't understand." She leaned toward him tenderly. "You know I haven't a wish in the world except for you. I'll fight with you right to the end—and I'll understand everything, for I know that some day you'll be great. I want you to do the things you are best fitted for. I'll never dictate to you or urge you to undertake anything your heart is not in. . . . Only I want you to give birth to the best in you. . . . I want to be proud of you."

West kissed her and went to his study. He knew that argument was useless. He could never justify in her eyes the future he had outlined. He would always cause her unhappiness, but he hoped her love would be large enough to rise above it. Perhaps some day she would become reconciled to the things he was to fight for. She would never be vindictive: he knew that. She was broader than most women. Her mind, in fact, was frankly unconventional in the minor matters of life. She had outgrown any religious inclinations she might have had as a girl. She had an intuitively intelligent taste for good music and the best literature. Even her moral code was unusually tolerant. Her instincts were purely fem-

inine. She had no desire to invade the masculine field of action; she viewed life from the standpoint of her own sex, condoning and understanding to a remarkable degree the standpoint of the opposite sex. West knew that her shortcomings were inherent in her nature, that in her criticisms she was reflecting the highest attributes of the negative will. His disappointment in her was not personal. He did not resent her words as indicating a deficit in her alone. His antagonism had been aroused, but it was directed against life itself, against the conservative conspiracy of all women. His mother, then Irene Brenner, later Margaret Moore, and now his wife—they had all been participants in the conspiracy. And they had all loved him.

He turned to his work with a sense of greater difficulties to overcome, with a knowledge that the forces against him had been increased.

XXII

THE next two years of his life were barren of production. His ideas had undergone no change, but a halcyon passivity had settled upon his spirits. His life ran smoothly, and the ease of his uneventful existence wrapped him round so completely that his instinct of revolt was for the moment smothered. Whenever it came to a choice between his work and a social pleasure he found it more enjoyable to take the latter. In order to exert the effort necessary to write he needed a stimulus of aspiration. In some unaccountable way he had been robbed of incentive, and he found that procrastination carried with it no qualms of conscience. At first he had worried because of his failure to experience his old enthusiasm for self-expression. As the empty months slipped by, carrying him no nearer the goal to which he had aspired, the panic which had accompanied the first weeks of his sterility subsided into an attitude of not entirely unpleasant resignation.

He had enlarged and embellished the articles which had appeared in the weekly and had found a publisher for them—a little-known house which specialized in revolutionary manuscripts dealing with social economics. The book had not sold to any extent and had been met with a general denunciation not unlike that called forth by its first serial publication. It had been a disagreeable event for West. His mother had written him a long depressing letter telling of her grief at reading his ideas, and pleading with him, for his own sake and those who loved him, to curb his evil doctrines and to develop the nobility that she knew was in him. Her reproaches

were petulant and tinged with the hopelessness of impotent sorrow. He had pained her deeply and shattered her long cherished hopes for him. For many months West was not able to shake off the effects of her letter. The tragedy of lost faith which her words epitomized haunted him with a violence born of the intimate memories of his boyhood and the ineradicable affection he held for the greying woman whose trust and love were centred in him.

His wife too had suffered. He awoke one night to find her crying softly. He attempted to comfort her, but her sadness was too deep to be dispelled by words.

"Oh, dear heart," she had answered, clinging to him in a passion of maternal tenderness, "when I think of what you could do, how great you could become, my heart breaks to see you destroying yourself and throwing away your wonderful gifts. . . . If I didn't love you with a love that is greater than anything in the world, I wouldn't care. . . . I'd give my life, here to-night, if I knew that by doing it it would bring you success and fulfil my dream of you. . . . Don't you see, dear, that you are only fighting a losing battle against all the things that the world has found to be best through centuries of striving and experimenting? . . . In the end you'll only be a castaway. All your energy will be gone, and the greatness and respect you might have had will be lost—forever. . . . Oh, I want to help you, to struggle with you; and when the day comes—as it is sure to—I want to share the glory with you, and know that my love has helped make you great."

She had sobbed and clung to him as if she were aware of some terrible force taking him from her.

During the weeks that had followed she had been silent and disconsolate. There had been no anger or reproach in her actions, only the consuming sorrow of one bereft. Once West had argued with her, defending his position with irritable harshness. The only effect his

words had was to make her tenderer than before and to intensify her grief. Later he had learned that some of the people they knew had criticized him in her presence, and that she had been deeply wounded. One of the two intimate friends she had known in London before her arrival had openly assumed toward her an attitude of unwarrantable formality and had failed to invite them to a dinner to which formerly they would have been the first to be asked.

West could understand the suffering that such actions caused his wife. Though she said nothing to him about them, lest they should make him suffer too, he read in her silences the effects of her humiliation. He could not escape feeling that he was personally culpable. His protective instinct toward women was too strong to permit him to disregard the part he had played in his wife's mortification. She loved and trusted him, and he had injured her. He felt a sudden hot sympathy for her, and the fact that she had not accused him of hurting her made him all the more gentle in his regard for her. Her innocence of his real aims, her lack of comprehension of his motives, and her unselfish forgiveness of what she considered his mistakes touched a deep current of his love for her. His antagonism vanished. In his heart he became her ally against the onslaughts of the world of people she lived among. Again he realized that he was the stronger, that her inner happiness, as well as her social status, depended on his exerting his power. Although abstractedly he resented her limited understanding and regretted the step he had taken in marrying her, an impulse of loyalty held him to her and directed his sympathies in her behalf.

The paradox of the situation troubled him. The bonds which held him seemed to tighten at every effort he made to throw them off. He reasoned the matter out unemotionally, but like all the great problems of life it appeared insolvable. No guilt attached to his wife. Had she

loved him less, had she been less ambitious to help him and share in his evolution, he could have stepped out into the open and been free. But the very enormity of her love was what rendered him helpless. It was a burden and an obligation too great for him to throw off. He told himself, however, that if sacrifice was to be made she must make it. The idea of altering his beliefs to meet the demands of her ideals was insupportable to him. That, he assured himself, he would never do. But even this resolution left him uneasy. It brought no comfort or assurance of ultimate triumph.

It was after this self-analysis that he began to let his work drift. In his mind he stood firm against the subterraneous influences of his wife. He looked upon her with eyes in whose expression were both ruthlessness and determination. He pitied her, kissing her often and holding her for long periods in his arms. But he did not concern himself with the effects of his heart upon the work which awaited him. He believed he had divorced these two dominating issues, and failed to trace to its true cause his willingness to let his writings go. His inclination to inaction he attributed to the recurrent mental lethargy which had always characterized his intellectual activities. The influences which were at work on him were too subtle and illusive to be classified.

But when eighteen months had passed over him and brought no change he began to inquire into his state. In the midst of his conjectures a letter from Seminoff arrived.

"A respite has come to me," he wrote, "and I am going to Europe for a few weeks. Can we be together part of the time? I fear something has happened to you, something psychological. Your book was not the end. You yourself, even with your urgent enthusiasm, could not have considered it in the light of a realization. It was only a beginning. It promised other things. But two years have gone, and nothing has followed. I cannot

believe that the world has yet dragged you down to its comfortable level. You tell me you are at work, yet you never specify. What am I to think? Perhaps I understand in a measure the cause of your inaction. Once, I remember, I jeopardized our friendship by warning you against certain influences. Will you forgive me if I warn you again? Do you demand conventional considerations from me? Life holds too much for you to permit it to drain you. A compromise on your part to the urgings of love would be criminal. I do not mean a deliberate compromise. You are too strong for that. I refer to the unconscious compromises a man makes when he is struck with a sentimental blindness. The only untoward influences I fear for you are the hidden, intractable ones, those that grip a man with such soft fingers that he does not feel them. Do you want to see me?"

West was partially shaken out of his mental coma by Seminoff's words. His wish to see his old friend was more than a mere desire. It was a need. He had floated out on the sea of indifference in a fog of spurious contentment. The distance he had drifted frightened him. Seminoff had brought him to a realization of his predicament. In order to return to land the assistance of Seminoff was necessary. He wrote at once: "Your letter has startled me. For over a year I have been deceiving myself. I alone am to blame for my unproductiveness. I have been held a prisoner without knowing it. Your letter has called to my mind things I have deliberately ignored, despite the fact that I have known all along of the persistent presence of the influences you refer to. But the matter is subtler than you imagine, more diabolical, perhaps, than anyone can imagine who has not come into direct contact with it. Strangulation by an enemy is one thing; but when the shackles are adjusted through innocence and love, through a passionate desire to benefit you, strangulation becomes an act of fate against which the individual is rendered powerless by

fundamental instincts of chivalry and pity. Life gives a man no weapons with which to combat such forces. Life makes us cowards and then confronts us with conditions with which only heroism and courage can cope. All this sounds like platitude, yet the vigour of the inevitability of actions is colossal. I realize that much has been taken from me beginning with my earliest boyhood—time, courage, strength, vitality, opportunity, ambition, freedom, a little hope perhaps. I am thirty, and I have taken no hostages from life. I have nothing to show for my years of struggle and study—only a handful of intentions, a few ineffectual spurts toward the goal I had set. There has been no progress, no upward soaring. There have been times when I have bent the bars of my cage, but I could never hold them apart for a sufficient length of time to escape. . . . You see I am honest with myself at last. You have made me so by awakening me. I shall wait with eagerness for your coming."

When Seminoff came they went alone into northern England. West longed for the silent places, the kindly stretches of the moors, the clean air of the country. For two weeks he was in a state of psychic convalescence. The prod of old ambitions urged him. He had carried with him the notes and outlines for work he had made when he had first come to London. In deserted country inns the two friends sat together, arranging and planning. They organized a book which West was to begin work on at once. They talked frankly to each other. West, because his percipience of his domestic conditions was new, confided to Seminoff without stint, for in his confidences he was explaining many things to himself also.

West returned to London stimulated and renewed. He had no thought or ambition save for the book he was to write. It was to be the first of many volumes, an elaborate introduction to an extended work setting forth a complete philosophy of æsthetic culture. It would

make a comparative study of all modern and ancient institutions. He worked long and laboriously. He was careful not to omit any points he was to develop later in the main body of his work. His earlier book was only a tentative statement of his beliefs. His new one would be more complete, firmer in its attitude, wider in scope, more intrepid as to utterance, indicative of a more positive egoism. It was sure to be met with greater denunciation than his former book. The antagonism would be fiercer. It would hurt his wife more; but he was prepared for that: Seminoff's arguments had fortified him against the influences of both his wife and his mother. One division of his new book in particular would lacerate them irreparably—a division treating of the psychology of sex, of the place of woman in the world's moral and intellectual activities. But he had determined on his course.

The book appeared the following year. West kept the manuscript from his wife. It was the first time since his marriage that he had not shared his work with her during its development. She was saddened somewhat by his aloofness, but did not complain. She gave up many pleasures and invited people only at infrequent intervals to the house during the process of his writing it. She avoided all subjects she thought might irritate or annoy him, and moulded her life to fit his whims. Several times she expressed an interest in the nature of the work he was doing, but when he seemed disinclined to discuss the matter she did not press the point. West noted the sacrifices she was making which were without even the compensation of enlightenment, and could not exempt himself from a feeling of guilt. She was aiding him to complete a book he knew would cause her suffering, and there were times when he looked at her with the consciousness of treachery. His sorrow for her pained him immeasurably, but he fought his grief with the memory of Seminoff's admonitions, and plunged forward

with the brutal recklessness of a long-dormant passion suddenly and unexpectedly aroused.

The extent of the storm which broke on the issuance of his work was greater than he had contemplated. The distress and suffering of Alice West overran the bounds of his previous imaginings. No doubt she had expected something entirely different. His two years of unfertile rest had given her hope that he had been weaned away from his earlier beliefs. The public animadversions had not astonished him, but the book's effect on his private life affected him deeply. He knew that had he been alone and independent he would not have cared; but when he saw the pitiable wreckage his doctrines had brought upon his wife and home, he was angered at Seminoff for having spurred him on to his present action. This anger was a transient emotion, however, produced by Alice West's tragic misery; and almost at once it expanded into a fiery hatred of the conditions under which he lived.

A week after the book had been circulated he and his wife had been practically ostracized. Alice West's most intimate friends had turned away from her, following the lead of others whose opinions they feared. She wept bitterly. The blow had come without warning. Even those of her friends who still called had changed greatly toward her. The withdrawal of the majority of her acquaintances had little effect on West personally. These friends he looked upon largely from the standpoint of his wife's pleasure. He had tolerated and encouraged them because he realized the necessity of social interests for her. They meant nothing to him intellectually, and had it not been for his wife they would have had no place in his life. Her point of view was different. They were intimate parts of the world in which she lived. From them was to come indirectly the rewards of her love: she counted on their admiration and respect for the great things her husband was to do some day.

Alice West for the first time during their relationship

displayed bitterness. To her it seemed that the foundation had been knocked from under their whole existence. The home she had carefully and lovingly built up during her five years in London had toppled about her. Her handiwork had been wantonly destroyed. Her sorrow for the moment became sullen. West shut himself in his study, but was unable to work. He went out alone and sat for hours in crowded cafés, trying to untangle the snarled and twisted factors of his situation. But the vision of his wife sitting alone in her home, deserted by the people for whom she cared, filled him with such despair that his solitary excursions left him with a heavier discouragement than if he had remained at her side.

"What have you gained, Stanford, by the disgrace you have brought on us?" she asked him one night, when the tide of her humiliation had partially subsided. "If it was for your good that I should be made to suffer this way, to have people talking behind my back, to know they were smiling at me pityingly, I wouldn't say a word. The things you write of women and morality reflect on me. Of course, they take it all personally. They think you don't respect me. . . . And they look upon you as a cad. I have actually overheard them use the word in referring to you. Oh, the shame of it all! . . . And it's not as if you believed the things you write—no decent man could. But people don't know that there are finer things in you. They believe only the worst. And you write nothing to disabuse them. . . . Your books may represent one kind of greatness, but it's not the highest type. There are great men living to-day who would not dream of sacrificing those who loved them to their own ends. And yet they stand at the top, and are happy; and those who love them are happy, too."

West asked her to specify the men to whom she referred, hoping to arrive at a closer understanding of her viewpoint. She named three or four of the most noted contemporary academicians, one an English novelist of

high standing, one a European dramatist who was fathering the modern school of realism, one a member of the French Academy. Unquestionably they represented the height that conservative creation had reached at the present day. But they were men whose opinions did not offend the current standards of thought. From the conventional standpoint they were great. The highest tributes were being paid them. But they were not explorers in knowledge; they were not men of fearless and original ideas.

West attempted to belittle their achievements, to describe a standard of greatness which was beyond them, but was halted in the midst of his remarks by the look in his wife's eyes. His words had frightened her. At length she spoke.

"Doesn't the opinion of the better class of educated people mean anything to you? Is ostracism and neglect the test of true greatness?" Her words were not meant as inquiries but as a rebuke.

West sensed the significance of her questions and said merely: "There are many standards of greatness. I'd rather die in want and exile and know I had done something new and worth while, than to receive all the benefits and emoluments of the world for something I didn't believe in."

She smiled with bitterness and unbelief. His words struck her as an insincere and quixotic mental gesture.

"My standard of greatness," she replied, "is the one recognized by the world. It isn't necessary for any one to fly in the face of life's finest ideals in order to become known. Your path leads to unpleasant notoriety, not genuine fame."

He went to his desk and brought forth several letters that the Continental leaders of unpopular thought had written him at the time his book appeared. These men were the independent critics who would have repudiated the offer of academic honours. But their names

were known to the few, and their influence was being felt despite the public rejection of their doctrines. They were lonely workers, those in whom the creative instinct was a sacred and exalted thing, the serious and solitary men whose insatiability made of them adventurers in untrodden fields. Their letters to West had been generous. Two of them admitted frankly they could not follow all the conclusions of his work, but that they appreciated his aims and the new breath which arose from his radicalism. All expressed interest in the books which were to follow.

Alice West read the letters without emotion. Their only effect on her was to substantiate her former views.

"These are not the world's great men," she answered sadly. "They are the free-thinkers who have been set aside by the world. Their names will die with their bodies, like thousands before them. They are the dissenters, the men who have gone astray through some deep perversion. Their talent and brilliancy are all that keep them alive. They are dishonoured—and you know it well. They have never been recognized by the truly great men. There is no great university in the world where their works are read. Have any of their books been decorated? Does any one of these men hold a responsible position? . . . Why can't you see and understand these things?"

West did not reply. There was no convincing his wife. He could never open her eyes to the vision which confronted him. She was not a unit whom he could persuade. She was the mouthpiece of the world, the epitome of the world's ideals, the symbol of the civilization of her age. In her was no past, no future. She personified the present, and beneath and beyond it she could not see. Her ideals were the reflection of practicality: her function was that of the conservator. Her whole instinct was the outgrowth of immediacy.

"After all, does it pay, dear?" she went on in a softer voice. "Aren't your peace and happiness worth anything

to you? . . . And what of me? Is the pleasure you get out of writing a few violent and immoral books worth ruining my life for? Don't you see that our lives are bound up together, that all of the scorn and hate the world vents on you falls on me in equal measure?"

She looked at him appealingly, and her tone, despite its gentleness, was fraught with the intensity of one imploring for life. Again West's love for his wife became a powerful weapon in her hands. Her appeal moved him, for he could not deny the truth of her words. His present course would mean her defeat and destruction. It would saddle her with a load of shame which she would ever look upon as a wilful injustice. An emotional power greater than the cold steel of his will was undermining his strength. A current of sentiment was resisting all his mental efforts to swim against it.

"Why aren't you willing to choose that greatness which will make me happy?" Alice West was saying. "Think of the rewards that might be yours, the triumphs and the glories of success! . . . What you are trying to do is so futile. It leads nowhere. Your only rewards will be disgrace and contempt. Think of the thousands of men who have been ruined and gone down into the bitterest oblivion by trying to fight the whole social order. . . . Their names are unknown. They are the failures. . . . What good has all their struggling and suffering amounted to? . . . You, dear, could become a great influence for good, so that great men would write about you and admire you. . . . To what great purpose would you sacrifice yourself and me? What would be the use of it? What would you gain?"

The futility of high ideals had always haunted West. The questions his wife had just asked him were questions for which he, in his moments of depression, had often sought to find an answer. Logically they could not be answered. His instincts alone had disposed of them and urged him on. But now there were counter-instincts at

work, and the fact that there was no logic to guide him took on a new importance. After all, what was the use of this ceaseless effort toward unattainable goals? Was it not the wiser course to seek the rewards which the world would give? Perhaps, even, he could compromise in such a way that he need not be untrue to himself. Was not all life, in the final analysis, a series of necessary compromises?

XXIII

During the following year the seed of the idea of futility sown in West's mind by his wife grew into a conviction. Its fertilizing field was despondency and discouragement. He had little strength with which to combat the comfortable persuasiveness of the idea. He found a decided serenity in adjusting his mind to Alice West's point of view. The task he had formerly set for himself was large enough to tax the full complement of his resources, and even at best a certain scepticism companioned his efforts: but when such tremendous obstacles as love, duty and loyalty barred the way to final achievement, his course appeared insurmountably difficult. His own scepticism increased, for the possible results of his adhering to his original plan seemed far inadequate to compensate for the price he would have to pay for them. It was not hard for him to convince himself that a course of compromise was advisable. Too many subtle and powerful influences were at work for him to cling to his early resolution. It was not a case of deliberate compromise indulged in at the cost of disgust and revulsion of self. It was a gradual alteration of his viewpoint, a slow and radical metamorphosis from contemptuous daring to the smooth and easy dalliance of a mind from which youth and courage have been driven out by bitter and deadening experiences.

He turned to fiction—a medium not entirely new and uncongenial to him. In his youth he had felt and given way to the fictional impulse. It afforded him a field in which his creative faculties might have full sway, and in which he was relieved of the necessity of setting

forth his revolutionary doctrines. At the University he had begun a novel. That was before his philosophy had taken form. And now he took out the unfinished manuscript, keyed himself up to its theme, rewrote the parts he had set down, and carried his scenario to completion. He had studied critically the masters of this type of composition, and his instinct for form and organization guided him surely in his task. His insight into life was deep. He understood people and the actions and reactions of human intercourse; and the vision of the world of his day was impersonally accurate. He described the life he knew, plunging into its hidden causes and analysing its motives. His book was neither sentimental nor didactic. It was an interesting and profound exposition of the currents and cross-currents of human existence; and, because he knew his people as they were beneath the surface, he described them with a sympathy which made them live. He became interested in this new work and wrote with extreme care, yet with nervous enthusiasm.

The book was well received. It was too serious a work, however, to find anything approaching a popular market. But, as his publisher described it, it was an "artistic success." The better-class reader bought it and admired it. The more scholarly critics praised it frankly, and the very novelist whom Alice West had mentioned as representing greatness, wrote West a personal letter of commendation. In the general enthusiasm for this new book his earlier works were forgotten. Two critics suggested without rancour that maturity had cured him of his adolescent heterodoxy. He was accepted as a novelist who would bear the closest watching. Great achievements were predicted for his future. He was the centre of an influx of beneficent admiration. Several publishers wrote him requesting to publish his next book. Already he tasted the honours of a worldly success.

These people who had formerly looked askance at him because of his early published moralities began to drift back into his life. New friends found their way into his wife's circle. Alice West herself was radiantly happy. She had blossomed forth from her year's sorrow into a vivid state of animation which to West seemed to surpass even her former good spirits. He himself, though, was not entirely content. His recognition did not bring him a sense of complete satisfaction. Something within him remained ungratified. His old desire had not been driven out, and when he thought of the concessions he had been led to make to the demands of the exterior factors in his life, he experienced the shame of an evasive and incomprehensible guilt. The feeling was not excessive and assailed him only sporadically. And there were many things which compensated for it. His vanity was assuaged by the encomiums he read of himself. The men who acclaimed his work stood for the highest in current criticism, and the deference of his social friends and those of his wife created about him an atmosphere conducive to mild mental exaltation. But he suffered nevertheless. He had sent a copy of the book to Seminoff, and had received only the barest acknowledgement of its arrival. His friend's silence did not astonish him, but as the weeks went by that silence became an accusation from which he could not free himself.

One night remorse took hold of him. He had lapsed for the moment into the body of his former self. His old ambitions and desires leapt from out the past and surged through him. The tawdriness of his present success became painfully evident. It was not the active remorse which dictates a change of action, but the hopeless remorse which might come to a man in prison when there was no chance of reprieve. He went to his study early, and mechanically took out the outline for the books he had planned during Seminoff's visit to England. He

had no definite object in view. He knew instinctively he would not complete them now. Yet he was drawn to them by a sort of morbid fascination. He began to reconstruct his life mentally as it might have been had he not married Alice Carlisle. This indulgence was an unpleasant one, but the very pain of it attracted him. Before he had finished he found himself hoping that something might happen to open once more the door of his desires. Even now, in the midst of his resignation, he could not escape the feeling that destiny held in store for him the things for which his soul craved.

As he sat borne far away on the tide of his dreams, Alice West entered softly. It was unusual for his wife to come to his study. From the day of their marriage she had respected his seclusion in this one room. Never had she disturbed him except on matters of urgent importance. He glanced at her sharply, fearing trouble, but her eyes were brilliant, and a look of contentment and happiness lighted her face.

"Dear heart," she began, when she had seated herself close to him, "put aside your work for a little while. I'm too happy to be alone. . . . I want to talk to you—to tell you something. . . . I thought the people would never go to-night, and when they did you had shut yourself up here. . . . I waited as long as I could—then I had to come to you."

He took her hand tenderly and waited.

"Do you know how proud I am of you—how happy you have made me?" It was not a query, but an exultant statement of her joy. "My faith wasn't misplaced. I've always dreamed of just such days as these. . . . I knew —my heart told me—that you could be great—that you could make the world pay you honour. And to think you've only begun,—your whole life is before you. Not even these people realize how truly great you'll be some day. . . . Aren't you happy, too, dear?"

West smiled faintly. His wife's happiness for the

moment seemed almost sufficient compensation for what he had given up.

"Of course, I'm happy. I'd be happy—no matter what I'd done—just because you're so happy." He took her in his arms and kissed her, and the world beyond her became insignificant.

She lay close to him and laughed softly. After a rapturous silence she said: "But all that isn't what I came to tell you. I'm happier even than I ever thought I could be. Next year—Oh, dear heart, to think that these two great joys should come to me at once!—next year, it won't be only you and I alone."

That night, after his wife had retired, West sat far into the night. After the first year of his marriage the possibilities of fatherhood had not entered his calculations. Nor had the subject ever been mentioned between them. His wife's confession of her condition had suddenly opened up a new vista of conditions. At first her words had not affected him emotionally. They had produced in him neither pleasure nor regret. They had only startled him, like the news of some momentous event which was outside the boundaries of his life. Only when she had left him did he begin to speculate on the consequences of the forthcoming event.

His paternal instinct fought with his ambitions. He felt that the last avenue of escape had finally been closed. Subconsciously he had counted on reinstating himself in the small intellectual world he had abandoned by writing his novel. The hope of going on with his other books had always remained with him, vague and inarticulate; but it had influenced his willingness to accept his present conditions. He had lied to himself—that fact was evident to him in the face of this new circumstance. But now even that unuttered hope was dispelled, and a depression settled upon him as he speculated on his future. The submerged feeling that he might on some later day shake off the bonds of conventional

compliance, rose vividly into the uppermost stratum of his consciousness, but was at once snuffed out. He was left in a state of hopeless and disquieting dejection. There was no chance of throwing off this new bond. It would become stronger as the years passed, and it would outlive him. The world-old antagonism between youth and age entered his heart. The tyranny of the new generation approached. And the ties which bound him to his wife had been strengthened by her pregnancy.

West did not try to fight against his fate. Now, less than ever, was he prepared to resist the love and hopes of his wife. A new love had entered his life, and its essence was tenderness. The following year his second novel appeared. According to the wishes of his wife the book was officially issued on the day his daughter was born.

"It was your gift to her, dear," Alice West had said, as he knelt beside her, watching with strange and tender interest the new-born child. "When she is old enough to read it how happy she will be—and proud!" She smiled weakly. "And to think she doesn't know what a wonderful father she has!"

The book deviated but slightly from the conception of his first novel. Its execution, however, was surer. The minor flaws of his previous work were here eliminated. Again the critics rallied to his support, praising him in their eagerness to justify their predictions of the preceding year. The sales of this new book were larger than before. It was more generally talked of. It called forth eulogy from the highest critical sources. This second performance made secure his place in current letters. His name was already being reckoned among the eminent figures of contemporary literature.

At first the praise had left West cold, but the private and public honours showed him gave him a feeling of worldly power and importance, which, though at first it had been merely agreeable, had later become desirable.

However, he was not entirely free from his own desires to write other things. He still felt that under propitious circumstances he might attain to higher and lonelier achievements, although the probability of reaching such a goal was lessening day by day.

XXIV

At this time West received news of his father's sudden death, and a request that he return at once to Greenwood to assist his mother in straightening the affairs arising from the tragedy.

A week at sea revived his old aspirations. Free from the directing agencies of his home, he looked upon himself with perspective. His self-deception fell from him, and he reviewed his past life with critical impartiality. He realized he had failed in carrying out the purposes of his youth, and he realized, too, that he had condoned his failure. When he arrived in America he was sickened and distraught. Seminoff met him at the pier, and West's remorse and shame were such that he scarcely spoke to his friend. The other recognized his distress and spoke only of trivial things. Together they went to Greenwood.

West was shocked at his mother's appearance. The years had aged her greatly. Her hair was almost white, and her recent sorrow had deepened the lines in her face. Quiet, sad days followed. Joseph West's affairs were simple and in order, and were quickly and easily disposed of. West lingered longer than was necessary, for again the associations of his youth had taken hold of him. He sat in his old room and looked out across the hills of his early inspirations. He walked by the river of his childhood dreams. He climbed into the glass-lined turret where he had first gratified his youthful ambitions to write, and spent hours living over his dead days of high hopes. Seminoff remained with him, and the years fell from West like unrealities until he again

became attuned to the eager ambitions which had once inflamed his blood.

On the day of his departure from Greenwood Seminoff and he had climbed to the pinnacle of Crow's Nest. The valley lay stretched out before them in the bright silence of the morning sun. It was just such a day as this that years ago West had stood alone contemplating the meagreness of the life at his feet. It was then that an alien genius from beyond the horizon had come to him and fired him with dreams of distant lands and splendid conquests, and he had thought the little brick College on Oak Hill too small for his keeping and had projected himself into the vast world beyond the hills. . . . Again that genius came to him now and carried his soul away to the lands he had never seen and to conquests from which he had shrunk during the past years of his servitude. That mystic, beckoning world was still awaiting him, just as when he had been a boy; and though he had travelled great distances beyond the hills he was as far from having achieved the glories that awaited him as if he had never deserted the quiet paths of his youth. The sensation of irreparable loss went through him, and it was followed by an almost frantic desire to gather up again the strings of his life which had slipped through his fingers. He felt stronger, more sure of himself now than at any time since his marriage. He believed in his power to combat the soft, draining influences of his family. With thousands of miles between him and them, they seemed less effectual. Isolated among the scenes of his boyhood he experienced again the sting of high endeavour.

"We part to-day, probably for many years." Seminoff's voice aroused him to his immediate surroundings. "Will you let me say something to you?"

West put his hand on the other's shoulder. He felt very close to his friend in all moments of mental stress.

Seminoff always seemed to him impenetrable and invincible, like an abstract dynamic force.

"Say whatever you please," he responded. "I shall probably agree with you in everything. Your words will shame me, but I want to hear them. During the past years your mental castigations have been all that have kept my philosophical conscience alive." He knew what Seminoff was about to say, but he welcomed the unpleasantness of his forthcoming words. They would whip into shape the scattered ends of his new resolve.

"The time has come for you to make a choice," Seminoff began, after a pause. "You've already thrown away many of your best years; and what has become of the promise of your youth? You wrote one book—years ago—which should have been your stepping-stone to greatness. It was little more than a prelude to what you might have done. Instead of following it up, you went back on all your ideals. You wrote an inconsequential novel. I looked upon it at first as an interlude—a concession to your wife, and I forgave you. Then, a year later, there came another of the same sort. I knew that you had been caught in the conventional tide, turned from your course, robbed of your decency and strength, strangled by the easy listlessness of compromise. It disgusted me, and in my heart I turned from you with a feeling that something worth while had gone out of my life. Then I thought of your age, and I felt that there was still time for you to get hold again upon yourself. Your cable came saying you were returning to America, and I decided to see you, to talk to you, to try to waken you to a realization of your cowardice. I won't mince my words. If they offend you, then I'll know that you have separated from me as well as from the path of your manhood. It will make little difference—your anger. It will be the anger of one dead to me. If you listen—if you still have that old spark of strength and courage in you, then I may regain the friend I have lost."

He stopped and looked at West who stood, silent and motionless, with bowed head.

"You're well past thirty," he went on. "Every day you wait carries you further away from your better and cleaner nature, and the chances for your return are fast slipping by. . . . Are you so weak that you would let a woman drag you from your high purpose and suck out of you, like a vampire, all the nobility and daring in your blood?"

West raised his head and was about to resent the other's words.

"Say what you choose," Seminoff hastened to say before the other could speak. "Lie to yourself, and strike me with the lie. . . . It doesn't matter. . . . You know I am telling the truth. You know that she's your enemy —unconscious, to be sure; and you know that I am your friend and that my words are just. . . . Make your choice."

West seated himself in silence, and rested his head on his hands. It was bitter medicine that was being fed him, but he determined to swallow it.

"Your wife is no worse—in fact, better—than the average so-called high-minded woman. It's not her fault. It's the fault of her sex. Women can't aspire beyond the heights to which the normal world has already attained. They are materialists, and their ideals are only the reflections of the material life of humanity. They want comfort, peace, plenty, stability, recognition—the solidity of a recognizable and familiar foundation. Some women see higher than others—then aspire to higher things, perhaps; but there's a limit to all feminine aspiration. . . . I see the whole sexual relationship symbolized in the wheel. The women are the hub, the men are the spokes, radiating from the centre, and yet held fast to that centre. The rim of the wheel represents the limits of the tangible and comprehensible world. . . . Before a woman had entirely subdued you to her limitations, you

soared to the mountain tops. Then you were dragged down—not because you could not have resisted her power, but because you were too weak, too easy-going, too sentimental, too enmeshed in your own sexual instincts. You turned from doing what you felt you had to do,—whether your ideas were right or wrong doesn't matter. The process of self-realization is the big thing, not the effects of your efforts on the world. . . . You began to write novels. And they were good novels—I don't deny that. They were capable, and so far as they went they were serious. For a lesser man than you they would have represented high achievement. The critics were right in acclaiming you. Judged impersonally, you deserve the honours paid you. But in those novels was none of that fine fervour, that reckless self-confidence, that vitality of new ideas, which was once a part of you. In them was the tacit acceptance of the world's standard of ethics and morals. They were brilliant records of life, but after all reportorial. They were not creative as applied to you. They reflected the petty conservatism of men's minds. . . . Do you yourself realize how cheap and superficial they were, judged by your own standard and not by that of the people who read them? . . . They spelled your disintegration, your failure, your weakness, your subjugation. They were dishonest—negative lies. They were the monuments of a coward—for you are a coward, a compromiser, a skirt-crazed weakling."

Seminoff's tone had become angry. His words piled up with fiery insistence. Had West's nature been smaller he would have resented the other's excoriation. He would have given way to the conventional instinct of superficial self-respect. He would have risen to the dictates of his dignity. But such impulses seemed to have no place in the present situation. He and Seminoff stood for the moment outside the gates of current formalities, and the poses of the world were not relative to their lives. They were stranded on an island where a simple,

primitive life obtained, where there were no codes or systems of conduct. West knew that he needed the scourge of Seminoff's words, for while the other was talking he had felt the ligaments of his own resolve tighten. And from the hidden dungeons of his mind there had clamoured forth an old, familiar strength which he believed was great enough to carry out that resolve.

There was a long silence when Seminoff had finished speaking. West looked down into the valley at the sleepy town and its grey and red roofs among the maples. His eyes rested on the brick College, and he sought out the turret of the home of his boyhood. How little the scene had changed! And yet how far away he had drifted! He felt suddenly younger, and he arose and took a deep inspiration.

"My resolution has been made—old friend," he said firmly. "It was here that I first dreamed of what I could do. To-day those dreams have come back to me. At first they seemed only the reflection of my earlier desires. But you have made them the same dreams, and they have taken hold of me with all their old energy and promise. . . . My heart is too full for me to say anything more to you about my life, but by this time next year you shall know what is in my heart."

That afternoon West accompanied his mother to Saratoga to the home of near relatives where she was to live. The old house in Greenwood was not to be disposed of. It was closed and sealed, and it would remain that way. It had been Joseph West's wish that it should never pass into outsiders' hands, that its family tradition should be preserved. He had hoped that it should be his son's dwelling, but when that possibility seemed to have fallen through there was but one other course left him whereby it should not be desecrated by strangers. It was to remain empty until such a day as his line should be irretrievably alienated from the placid ways of earlier generations. Then it should be torn down. In his will

he had provided for its upkeep, closing that item of his codicil with the words: "until such a day as when my own shall be forever lost to me, or when my own shall return to the quiet ways which have been mine, and my father's, and his father's before him. In either event, my son Stanford shall dictate the day of consummation." West could have decided that now and had the house torn down, for the chance of his returning to it seemed not within the realms of life's possibilities. But that would have saddened his mother and broken the serenity of her dreams. So the house was to rest intact and untenanted until her death.

West remained a week in Saratoga. It had not been his intention, but when he saw the broken, helpless condition of his mother, emphasized by her final departure from the home in which her life had been spent, he feared for her health and stayed close to her, helping her to overcome the effects of the tragedy that had put an end to her happiness. The suddenness of Joseph West's death had given her no time to fortify herself against the emptiness of the coming years. For the first two weeks following the event she had been like a woman stunned, incapable of reacting to her grief, insensible to the true condition of her new state. Not until she had reached Saratoga did the relief of tears come to her. And so violent was the sudden and complete realization of her loneliness that she was physically exhausted. When West had first seen her he mistook her calm for fortitude. Her real suffering, however, did not come until she had passed from out the environment of her forty years of married life. Then the great wave of her desolation flooded her, and she gave way under it and became an old woman.

Her suffering affected West almost as deeply as had his father's death. He did all in his power to comfort and console her, at the same time fighting desperately against the effects of this double tragedy which seemed

to tear his heart apart like a physical thing. At length his mother's strength returned, and she got her sorrow under control. Her self-mastery returned, and West felt safe in going from her. But the week's ordeal had racked and devitalized him. His strength of mind and body had been sapped by the experience. He looked back upon Seminoff's talk with him on Crow's Nest as an almost trivial incident. In the face of profound and devastating realities even his work seemed only the inconsequential flotsam on the surface of life.

On the day he was to go his mother put her arm about him and drew him down beside her.

"Son," she said, "I want to talk to you—only for a few minutes. To-day you go from me, and maybe I shall never see you again. But I want you to tell me something. I want to hear it from your own lips. . . . I really don't worry about it, but now you are all I have left in the world, and during these last terrible days a strange fear has come over me—a fear that maybe—maybe I may lose you, too. Not in the way I lost your dear father, but in another more awful way. . . . Tell me, son, that you are never going to write any more of the kind of books you first wrote. . . . I couldn't stand it now. I've been so happy over your success. I've tried to forget that my own child ever thought the things you once published. I've told myself that you were young and didn't mean them, and these last years have strengthened me in that belief. It wasn't so hard when I had your father to comfort me, but now—don't you see?—you are all that I have."

Her voice broke, and the tears forced themselves into her eyes.

After a distracted pause, she continued: "I'm all alone, and I couldn't go through the horror again of the days that followed your other writings. . . . I couldn't stand it, son. It would kill me. It would take everything out of my life. Without you there is nothing for

me to live for any more. If you deserted me now it would be the last drop in my cup of sorrow. If ever you should write such things again, I'd know that when I laid your father away I'd laid away everything that I had in life."

She drew West's head to her shoulder and kissed him sobbingly. He, too, was overcome with her grief, and took her gently in his arms, returning her disconsolate caresses.

"Mother of mine," he told her, "don't add to your burden by imagining such things about me."

She smiled faintly through her tears.

"I know you wouldn't deliberately break this last remnant of my hope in life, but I want you to promise me. Then I can let you go from me without too great a heartache. . . . It's not only for my sake, son. It's for yours, too, and for Alice's and the baby's. If you could have seen the letter she wrote me in her misery; you almost broke her heart. She loves you with a very great and unselfish love, and if you should go back to your youthful beliefs she would suffer just as I would, only her suffering would be that of disgrace as well. I am alone and disgrace doesn't matter now. . . . And the baby, too, would be disgraced. Think of the handicap she would have to fight against when she was old enough to feel the effects of her father's acts! It wouldn't be worth while, would it, son?—You might far better kill the three of us outright. . . . Oh, you will promise me, won't you, dear? You won't take the last hope of my life from me. . . . You won't break Alice with grief, and disgrace that little life you have brought into the world. . . . You owe her your protection. You owe it to yourself to take care of her and make her happy. You are all I have. . . . Promise me you won't——"

During her final words she had become utterly distraught. Her tears flowed freely, and she clutched West's hands with almost hysterical nervousness. He looked at

her sunken eyes and white hair. Her hands were thin and had lost their grace. The blue veins stood out upon them. The desolation of age had claimed her, and the tragedy of all the world seemed centred in her. He felt a constriction of his throat, and his mother's happiness for the moment he would have bought at any price.

"I promise, mother dear," he said softly.

XXV

Again in London, West was more than ever aware of the fetters which held him to a life against which his spirit revolted. His weeks of absence seemed to have lessened his sentimental interest in his wife. He experienced little pleasure in being again with her and his child. On the train from Folkstone to London he was seized with an excessive and unaccountable nervousness. It was not that he did not love his wife; but something in the imminent return to his conjugal relationship revolted against a deep, natural instinct whose meaning he did not attempt to analyse. His promises to Seminoff had been forgotten. His old desires were not uppermost in his mind. He was still under the spell of his mother's sorrow. Her appeal to him on the day of his departure had more than counteracted the effect of Seminoff's words. He was gloomy and, in a measure, resigned. The thought of his unfulfilled ambitions did not affect him deeply. He had been forced to accept life at its own terms, and his system seemed drained of all desire for struggle.

During the first few weeks of his return the tentacles of comfort and ease, of careful and loving attention, of orderliness, of a smooth-flowing and subfusc routine, reached out and encircled him; a spirit of rest and contentment pervaded his being. A letter from Seminoff, reviewing their meeting and calling attention to West's promises, failed to arouse in him any of his former emotions. The letter was read hurriedly and put aside. In half an hour its contents had been forgotten.

A year of idleness went by. No ambitions of any kind stirred him. He thought little of his possibilities. The

book he had written under Seminoff's influence drifted so far into the perspective of the past that during his moments of retrospection he came to look upon it with unemotional and impersonal eyes. He had no inclination to continue his more recent work—the work which had pleased his wife and his mother. The creative spirit had gone from him. His life was filled with small pleasures and with innumerable details which, though not important, had about them an air of necessity. The plaster of his existence had hardened about him. Insinuatingly the idea of permanency and perpetuity took hold of him, until it was difficult for him to imagine a routine other than the one in which he was living.

He had come to love his daughter more and more as she grew and developed. His tenderness toward her increased; and the thought of doing anything to injure her appeared to him so monstrous that he could think of no compensation great enough to warrant any such act. As he thought back to his mother's and his wife's pleadings with him to forgo his heresies on the child's account, he felt the justice of their appeals. After all, what end would be served by breaking the hearts of those who loved him?

At the end of two years he smiled at his old vehemence and fire. There was something bordering on the preposterous about his early passion to revitalize the world with his ideas. He even regretted the sufferings he had passed through, the sacrifices he had made to his principles, the disappointments he had undergone. How much happier would have been his boyhood had he been like the others —care-free, uneager, uninspired, normal. Yes, that was it: he had been abnormal. As a consequence he had missed much of the spontaneous and unquestioning fellowship of other boys. He thought of his rupture with the *Monthly* board at the University and of his subsequent ostracism; and felt a little ashamed of himself. He recalled the lonely hours during which he had brooded

over impossible ideals of a new culture; and felt cheated by those lonely, desolate struggles. He remembered his father's prediction to him at the end of their first distressing clash—"Some day you'll think back on these words of yours, and your remorse will be your bitterest punishment." For the first time since he had become a man that cruel hour had come back to punish him. Then there was his book which had injured his wife and nearly broken his mother's heart. He felt guilty at the thought of it. The world had already forgotten it, but the scars still remained on the hearts of those who held him dear.

He seemed much older now. The years had brought him tolerance and had minimized the hot desires of adolescence. He could look back upon his life with the critical suavity of a placid and substantial maturity. What pain he had passed through! What battles he had fought to no avail! How much he had missed through the blindness of aspiration!

And yet, as the pageant of the departed years passed by him in retrospect, his youth was only superficially bitter. It was strung upon a thread of golden pleasure. He felt its rich and splendid compensations, without knowing exactly why he should have felt them, for he had nothing to show for the price he had paid. But in all those intellectual struggles there had been a subtle and transparent essence of joy, a divine philtre, which made his memories precious. The episodes of his boyhood would not lend themselves to isolated speculation. He found that he must dream his youth as a whole, not as a song, nor yet as mere cacophony, but all that he had been —the great tears, the high hopes, the kisses and the heartaches, and the old sorrows and the hills at dawn, the laughter and grief and the stern fight. He discovered that in the dissonance of his soul there lay an incoherent unity of things—the gold with the dross, the brilliant colours with the grey. He was no longer a child, and the desperate hopes of his childhood were now put aside.

During the three years following his return from America, Alice West had spoken little of his non-productiveness. People had still read and talked about his novels. Critics referred to his work and mentioned him from time to time in their reviews of modern English letters. But other men, busier than he, were struggling toward the front, and new names were supplanting his in the columns of the literary publications. It was at this time that his wife came to him and pressed him about his work.

"Don't forget, dear," she said, "that you must uphold your greatness. As fine as your other books have been, I feel that you can do even greater things. It has been a long time since you wrote. So many people have asked me if your next book has been planned. And I don't know what to tell them. You mustn't become lazy, dear, and let your wonderful talents get rusty. There's no height to which you can't attain; and I want to see you at the top."

Her words quickened him.

"I have been lazy," he admitted, "but I shall soon begin to plan another work. . . . I have been so happy with you and the baby that everything else has seemed subordinate."

"It's for the baby as much as for myself, that I want you to be great," Alice West told him. "You will go back to your work, won't you?"

For days thereafter she kept the subject alive, asking him if he had thought of what he was to write about. As a result of her constant suggestions and questionings his mind began to speculate along fictional lines. He studied the people about him critically, looking for external inspirations for his new book. At length the germ of his theme came to him, and for weeks thereafter he helped it fructify, making notes and working out bits of psychology which were to be developed later. His mind had become once more adjusted to the labour of

novel writing. The stress of endeavour was once more upon him. But this time it did not give him the pleasure and satisfaction he had once felt. He was eager enough to write, but his emotions lacked intensity; they did not absorb him completely. But he set to work with avidity, constantly egged on by his wife's interest.

He shut himself up and wrote steadily. It was an obligation he owed himself and his family, and his sense of duty was, for the moment, his paramount instinct. During the process of writing his new novel his conscience did not trouble him. He did not inwardly revolt against the task as he had when first he turned from his early ambitions to write what was demanded of him. He realized that he had changed much, for there had been a time when he would have resented his present labour. But even this knowledge did not make him unhappy. The wild and solitary aspirations of his early years appeared to him now in the guise of ludicrous and futile promptings. Sometimes, when the subject came up, he, himself, would ridicule his former ambitions. Alice West would smile contentedly, happy and secure in her husband's new point of view. She could afford to be generous now, and she did not join him in his ridicule. To the contrary, she defended his old impetuosity, saying that it marked a transitional period through which all great men were apt to pass. She even apologized for her bitterness toward him during that period.

"If I had only known," she would say, "I would have said nothing to make you unhappy. I should have understood that your heresies were only temporary. Deep in my heart I always knew that things would change some day, and yet I could not put away the fear that you would go on and on as you were going. That's why I pleaded with you as I did—that's why I made you suffer by my faultfinding. But it's all over now, dear; and I am happy. My present pride in you has made me forget the sorrows I passed through for your sake."

Then she would ask him how the new book was progressing. She would discuss it with him at length, and he would show her passages from it. She admired it, and was frank in her enthusiasm. She even suggested the alteration of certain details, saying that the woman's point of view was good for his book, that her intuition was surer than his masculine judgment. More than once she convinced him that she was right, and he made the changes she suggested. His acquiescence to her modifications secretly pleased her. It made her feel that she was, in a measure, a collaborator with him. And West, seeing her pleasure, was happy also. Before the book was finished, he had come to believe that she was a great help to him in his work, that the little "touches" which she contributed were improvements. As a result he began to feel his dependence on her. Gradually the idea of humanism entered into his calculations. Perhaps, after all, he reasoned, he was too cold and analytic. It was quite possible that he lacked that warmth of intimacy which would give his book the final touch of inspirational sincerity. There might be in his standpoint too relentless a logic to permit of his work being a moving document. Therefore, he listened to his wife's criticisms, and compromised with the inevitability of his syllogisms by introducing into them the irrational and appealing humanity which motivated her judgments. He did not err on the side of sentimentality. He merely qualified his conclusions with the tolerance of sympathy.

When the novel appeared, the critics once more applauded. They spoke of the mellowness of his maturity. He had not written a book for many years, and they intimated that during those years he had come to a truer understanding of the human struggle, that he had shaken off a certain intolerance of youth which had characterized many passages of his earlier fiction. Those of the reviewers who had praised him before found in this book a justification for their prophecies. They had said

that he had possessed great promise; and now, they asserted, that promise had been fulfilled. By this new book he became an important and established factor in English letters. He was generously commended by the older men who, in the security of their position, could afford to welcome him into their ranks. Several of the younger men wrote to him for advice and criticism, and his words of praise in connection with the first book of a new author were used extensively for advertising. No longer was he on trial.

His book sold well. It was not a large commercial success, however. It was too careful and able a piece of work ever to have succeeded greatly from a purely popular appeal. But there were very few people interested in current literature who did not know of him and of the book, and who did not respect him and believe in his greatness. Two important and conservative editorial appointments were offered him, each of which implied a high honour. But he did not accept them. He did not care for such work. Even the tributes which were paid him left him singularly unmoved. He accepted them as a matter of course and with little enthusiasm.

Alice West did not understand his attitude. For a man of his years he had attained much. Her dreams of him had been materialized. She imagined that the greatness for which he had always striven had at last come to him, and she was genuinely proud and happy.

"You should be the happiest man in England, dear," she said to him one night, when they had returned from a dinner at which he had been the guest of honour. The most important literary men in the country had been present, and their praise had been unstinted. "Think how young you are, and what you have already attained!"

"I am happy," he replied, a little wearily. "And yet, to-night, as I sat listening to the compliments that were being paid me, I did not feel as I once thought I would feel. I ought to have been thrilled, I suppose. I should

have felt like the luckiest man in the world. But the greatness I've achieved seemed tame to what I had imagined."

West did not analyse his emotions. He accepted his literary experiences with the same quiet reserve that he exhibited toward all the other pleasurable factors of his life's routine.

"I can't understand why you do not feel as proud as I do," his wife went on. "The realization of success, after all your struggles, is more wonderful to me than I had ever dreamed it could be, and the thought that I have helped you is the most wonderful part of it."

"Don't think that I am not appreciative," West told her, tenderly. "You have helped me much, and I realize how much of my success is due to you."

Another year went by—a year of comfort and happiness. Wherever West went, he found that he was sought after and respected. The magazines and literary reviews mentioned his name and his work constantly. Nearly every mail brought him some fresh indication of his established acceptance. At first he read all that was said about him. But after a few months had passed he merely glanced over the accounts which referred to him; and, as time went by, he did not take the trouble to open the marked copies of the periodicals. They failed to interest him.

Alice West, however, read them all, and rebuked him for his lack of appreciation.

"How wonderful it must be," she said sometimes, "to be so great that you don't care what people say about you!"

She looked upon his disinterestedness as a sign of absolute and self-sufficient contentment. In her eyes his lack of vanity and egotism spelled strength, and it was with pride that she told many of her intimate friends of his indifference to the world's plaudits.

He was now working on another book. As formerly,

Alice West talked with him about it. Her interest in it was keener than his own, for though he felt a certain satisfaction when he thought of the eagerness with which his words would be read, and of the praise which would be accorded him, he failed to experience any genuine gratification in his efforts. He was never overpowered by the hot urgings of his creative will. He wrote regularly every day; but when, in the early evening, he put his pen aside and joined his wife at tea, his mind easily forgot his task; and when he rose in the morning, he felt no fires burning within him. He was not eager to return to his work, and he went upstairs to his study with the leisureliness and deliberation of a man performing an habitual exercise.

When the novel at length appeared, the reviews treated it, not as the work of a new man whose laurels were in doubt, but as the accepted expression of one who had arrived. The leading critics in the United States for the first time claimed its author as one of their countrymen, expressing their regret that he had chosen to expatriate himself. This new eulogy affected West even less than had the former, and when his wife expressed her joy at the envious reputation he had acquired, he looked at her in mild wonderment, as if he could not understand why she should care. He seemed to have lost interest in everything pertaining to intellectual struggle and endeavour. He felt that for the rest of his life he could go on writing books of a similar nature; but the prospect moved him no more than if he considered any one of the other hundred activities with which his future would inevitably be filled. His writing had become a part of his routine, like eating, sleeping and walking. What significance lay in the fact that certain men, who had arrogated to themselves the business of judging others, should give him credit for what he wrote? His literary ability was second nature to him. To write books such as he had recently published required no intellectual effort on his

part. The knowledge which went into their making was accepted property; and the facility and the earnestness with which he set forth his story were acquisitions to which he no longer gave thought or attention.

After the issuance of the second new book, a subtle discomfiture invaded his life. It was purely an abstract unrest, and he could not trace it to any definite cause. The praise of the people round him began to annoy him. Instinctively he avoided their commendation. When Alice West insisted upon his greatness he became slightly irritated. Her happy satisfaction increased his disquietude, and many times when he sat down at table with her, it was with a feeling of apprehension lest she might bring up the subject of his fame. He tried to discourage her in her enthusiasm, but she mistook his attitude for insincere modesty, and refused to comply with his wishes. Without knowing the cause for it, he began to withdraw from the people he knew. He spent more time alone. When his work was finished in the afternoon, he would send word to his wife that he was unable to join her at tea; and he would sit alone in his study, smoking abstractedly, letting his mind play over the events of his matured life.

West was self-analytical, and more than once he tried to run down the reason for his restlessness. However, no solution presented itself to him, and, in time, he attempted to dismiss his condition as a result of nervousness due to overwork. For a few weeks he went to Paris, alone, throwing himself into its café life in the hope that he could shake himself free from this new feeling which amounted almost to despondency. But on his return to London he was no better, and he again went to work in an attempt to forget it.

Alice West noticed the change in him, and spoke to him about it.

"Is there anything troubling you?" she asked. "Surely, if anyone has cause to be happy, it is you."

"I think it is only a temporary depression," he answered. "I can account for it in no other way. It is nothing serious, however. I simply seem to have reacted against the glory that has been heaped on me. When once I get my new novel started, it will disappear."

"You have received enough admiration," his wife said, half humorously, "to make even a sick man well. How can you be downcast when your name is on everyone's lips—when the greatest men living are extolling your literary virtues?"

"That's what I can't understand." West thought a moment. "And yet—somehow—I don't want their praise. I sometimes wish I were unknown. Do you know, the other night, when that French Academy pundit was calling me the ablest novelist in England, I felt like rushing from the room. His words inspired me with animosity toward him: every time I think of his remarks I feel uncomfortable. . . . I don't know what it is, but I become uneasy and restless whenever I am told how great I am."

Alice West left him, frightened at his words. Alone, she, too, tried to account for his attitude. At first, she had thought it was due to his want of vanity; but, as the days went by, she became convinced that it went deeper. And because she could not understand it, it became a troublesome mystery to her. She did not bring the matter up again, but respected his inclination toward solitude.

A month after his latest book had made its appearance, he received a communication from Seminoff. West had not heard from him for over a year, not since before the publication of his book of the previous year. He had thought little of the other's silence. His regard and respect for Seminoff had diminished since his return to England. He had even laughed a little at the other's impassioned idealism. Seminoff's words and admonitions had of late appeared to him as the extravagances of youthful zeal. This friend of his school days belonged to

that other world which West long since had outgrown—the world of ambition and sacrifice, of high hopes and hot dreams.

When he saw the envelope with its familiar handwriting, he smiled with a kind of superior sympathy at the associations it brought to mind. Opening the letter, he read it; and for nearly two hours he did not move from his chair.

"For many years," it said, "I have waited and hoped for the great work which you promised me you would do. It has not come, and I see now that it will never come. When your new novel appeared a year ago, I said nothing. I was on the point of writing you, as I am now writing, but restrained myself, making allowances for the other influences in your life. I thought, perhaps, that novel would be your last—a final compromise with the deadening influences which have swayed you for so long. I believed that, during the intervening years, you had been working on the books we had talked over together, and that the novel was thrown out as a sop to the constant demands which I knew were being made on you. I attributed the book to a temporary weakness, realizing how difficult it is for a man, once caught in the conventional toils, to wrench himself free.

"The other day your new novel appeared, and I am forced to the conclusion that there is no hope for you. You have bartered the most sacred things in your life—the great power and the able mind you once possessed. You have sold them for the benefits of a cheap academic success. You have been acclaimed a great novelist. But acclaimed by whom? People whose minds are immured in tradition, in the sloughs of mediocre and despicable conventionalism. Judas betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver. You have betrayed your own higher self for the same dirty emolument. No! I won't give you so much credit! You did not need the money. You did not even have the excuse of necessity for your con-

temptible conduct. You betrayed yourself because you were too cowardly to fight off the soft influences of women. From the standpoint which you, yourself, once held, your novels are unworthy—you know this as well as I do. You have chosen the smooth, easy, benign pathway of the weakling.

"I believed in you once. I was proud to call you my friend. Now, I repudiate you, and blush for the fact that I ever held you in high esteem. Had another man written these books of yours, they, perhaps, would have been worth while. But for you to have written them is a crime against which the ghost of every decent instinct in you should rise up in revolt. If you have no shame for yourself, then I, at least, have shame for you; but it is a shame that one feels for a craven. You shall never again hear from me, nor shall I ever care to hear from you or of you again. My rejection of you and of the memory of our friendship will, I know, make no inroads on your smug and comfortable hypocrisy. A man who would act as you have, who would throw away so great a gift as you possessed, because he was not willing to bear the suffering which went with its exercise, is without a sense of the higher decency.

"What I cannot understand, however, is how a man of your promise could face the tawdry eulogy with which the little minds are showering you. There was a time when you would have scoffed at such praise, when your ideals transcended all such petty panegyrics. You had in you the germ of true greatness. Now you are a seeker of conservative and academic honours. My disgust for you is measured by the depth of your own decline. I could have thrown your books away in silence and despised you in my heart without apprising you of it. But, for some reason, I wanted you to be aware of the fact that there was someone in the world who knew how despicable you are, how unworthy of any consideration. In the chorus of commendation there is one dissenting

voice. And may that voice of mine act as your conscience, for you seem to have lost your own."

It was dark when the servant came to West with a message from his wife. She had sent word that he must not forget their dinner engagement that evening.

He rose and shook himself, as if he had been roused from a deep sleep. He looked at the servant with unfamiliar eyes, and nodded abstractedly. At last he understood the cause of his unrest. He knew now why he shrank inwardly from public acclaim. He was like a man who, having lost his memory, had received a sudden shock which had once again set his associative faculties in motion. And in that awakening he felt as if he had aged since last he was master of himself, and as if the great opportunities of his life had slipped by. He resented Seminoff's letter, was enraged at its brutality. But much of his anger was engendered by a sense of his own unworthiness.

That night at dinner he saw, with a clear vision, the littleness and mockery of his success.

XXVI

During the following weeks West's life became almost unbearable. He went out little. Whenever there were social obligations to be met, he pleaded a headache or the necessity of finishing some important bit of writing. He experienced a complete revulsion for the encomiums of the people with whom he habitually came in contact. His wife's attitude of satisfaction over his success took on the aspect of grim and cynical mockery. His home with all of its intimate details, so long cherished, lost its appeal, leaving him with a sense of black disappointment, as if some jewel for which he had paid an enormous price had turned out to be paste. The greater his worldly success, the more emphatic became his inner sense of defeat. He grew suddenly weary; his spirituality had been stricken with paralysis. Seminoff's words had burned through his being like shafts of flame. For that vicious letter he knew that he could never forgive the man he had once loved like a brother. The affection he had borne Seminoff turned to a bitter hatred. His emotion at times took the form of a desire for physical violence.

Yet the letter's influence persisted—that was the unforgivable part of it. It stirred him more deeply than any other event in his life. It had set fire to the whole peaceful edifice of his existence. It had stripped the clothes from his soul and left him naked and miserable. It had turned him against himself, against his wife and his child, against his mother, against every factor in his new and comfortable mode of living. It had wrecked his plans, had torn the foundations from under him, had withered up the happiness he had attained, had set him

once more adrift on the turbulent sea of doubt and chaos. When he thought of it, his cheeks burned with shame; his heart became sick. He attempted to laugh the letter away, to overcome its fell influence with scorn and derision. But his laughter was hollow and ineffectual; it smote his ears with the dread of insincerity.

For over a month he wrote nothing, although he went to his study every day, coming forth only for his meals. He studied books which for years had remained on his shelves unopened. He read his own early volumes, secretly hoping that, in the light of his maturity, they would appear false and juvenile. But they offered him no consolation. He even marvelled at their depth and brilliance. They tended only to accentuate the despondent alarm which had taken hold of him. They showed him concretely the enormous strides of his disintegration. After he had read them he did not attempt to laugh away the truth of Seminoff's excoriation. He endeavoured, by an elaborate process of reasoning, to justify his decadence, to find a name for it which was free from onus. He turned to those philosophical writers who denied reality and claimed that the material world was but the figment of some giant dreamer's mind. He sought out the many historic denials of free-will, and weighed them carefully. He gave days of consideration to the doctrine of eternal recurrence; and in the end he turned to Schopenhauer, hoping to find stimulus in that thinker's pessimism. But all his labours proved of no avail. When he imagined that he had convinced himself of the unreality and meaninglessness of existence, his instincts overrode his logic, and allowed him no peace.

One night at the opera, where he had gone with a small party in the hope of gaining temporary relaxation from his torturing disquietude, he found himself sitting next to Evelyn Naesmith, a young woman he had met casually on two or three previous occasions. They now sat in the rear of the box, a little separated from the others. West

felt a mild satisfaction in the arrangement, for though they had spoken to each other only a few times, he remembered vividly the unusualness of her manner and words. He remembered, too, that once she had spoken with serious admiration of the book of his which had nearly resulted in his wife's ostracism. He had been a little startled at the time, but soon after had dismissed the episode, attributing her remark to an insincere and conventional instinct. Since then, however, when he had met her, he had been struck with a certain terse intellectual freedom which seemed to characterize her and differentiate her from the other women in his and his wife's circle of acquaintances. He had heard her spoken of as an "intellectual woman"—a woman who had travelled much and read deeply, and whose interests were broad and informal. Even men had mentioned her ability to discuss topics which ordinarily lay outside of a woman's personal range. In fact, men seemed to like her in a companionable way. Her sense of satire, perhaps, discouraged those among them who might have pretended to a more intimate relationship. Women were at times shocked at her opinions, but they excused what they termed her intellectual eccentricity, because they had only her words, and not her actions, with which to condemn her. Her conduct was always above reproach. She knew many important people, and was able to uphold her end of any conversation which the situation might have offered. She was well-informed and well-versed in all contemporary literary activities.

Evelyn Naesmith did not look over thirty, though one might have found in her talk and manner many indications that she was older. She dressed youthfully and in the latest styles, always adding to her costume some original, bizarre touch which attracted attention. In an aggressive way, her physical appearance was not without fascination. Her blue eyes were cold and penetrating, and her chin was firm. Her lips were not sufficiently

full to indicate voluptuousness; but her face was far from neutral, despite the fact that its sensualism was that of the mind rather than of the body. Her hair was bronze, but it seemed to possess a greater degree of brilliance than is ordinarily found in hair of similar hue. She wore it parted and brushed back where it formed a large braided knot well down on her neck; and not infrequently she appeared in a bandeau which was always drawn low on her forehead. Her tapering hands were well-kept, but, despite their softness, they gave the impression of strength and capability; and she adorned them with heavy and simple jewelry. She was tall and slender and possessed of a lithe and solid gait. Her flesh was firm to the touch, and she weighed many pounds more than one would have guessed.

Her poise and self-confidence constituted her most marked characteristic. Her appearance was slightly exotic, though one would have had difficulty in saying just what point about her gave this impression. She seemed to realize that in her appearance there was something unlike that of other women; and this fact coupled with the consciousness that she was mentally different as well, resulted in an ease and complacency of manner. She talked frankly and criticized without any apparent fear of consequences. On the surface she appeared free from the conventional chicaneries of deportment which characterized the other members of her sex. She affected an impersonal point of view, and looked upon the trivial affairs of other women with a smiling and amiable condescension. Those who knew her were always expecting some fantastic and unconventional deed from her: her startling beliefs had prepared them for an act of mediæval wildness. But her deportment and her doctrines were kept well separated, and she had never supplied a peg on which to hang a scandal.

At the opera that night, West had scarcely time to greet her before the curtain rose. She acknowledged his

conventional remark in a manner which made him wonder whether or not there had been a touch of disdain in her expression. She had turned from him immediately, and concentrated her eyes on the stage, leaning slightly forward. He, too, tried to become interested in the music and acting. But he had never cared deeply for opera, and to-night its artificiality seemed more evident than ever before. He settled back in his chair and watched the profile of the woman. Once or twice his eyes wandered to his wife's face, rested there a moment, and then came back to Evelyn Naesmith. He found himself speculating on the latter's character in an endeavour to remark the difference between her and his wife.

This analysis was little more than a mental exercise, and he did not pause to consider why he should have been interested in the operation. Suppose circumstances had been such that he had married Evelyn Naesmith—what would his life have held for him other than what it now held? He asked himself this question in the same spirit that he might have speculated on a new form of government, without a realization that the interrogation affected him personally. But when he arrived—more through instinct than through logic—at the conclusion that he would have found in this other woman a deeper sympathy and understanding, he felt that destiny had, in some way, tricked him. He frowned without knowing it, and shifted a little in his chair.

When the curtain went down on the first act, Evelyn Naesmith turned to him.

"The world hasn't seen you for weeks," she remarked. "You have been busy on another—successful novel?"

Her tone was not light and inconsequential. West even imagined that there was a basis of scorn beneath her words. He studied her a moment.

"Yes, I have been working," he answered, a little coldly. "And the book may prove successful."

"I am sure that it will." There was no compliment implied in her remark.

West attempted an easy smile.

"You do not like my novels?" he asked, indifferently.

"Quite as much as you do," she said.

West was about to respond, but restrained himself. The woman's eyes were too penetrating; her tone had been too final. He knew that she would see through his deceit if he attempted to resent her words, or to assure her of his sincerity. He felt that she had spied on some intimate secret in his nature, and he could not ride above the sudden wave of mental embarrassment which swept over him. She both intrigued and angered him.

"Shall you go on writing novels—always?" She pretended not to notice his embarrassment.

"Probably," he replied at once, as if the matter was of minor importance.

At this she smiled, and began toying with her heavy jade bracelet.

West watched her. "Does my work really interest you?"

"Truly great men are so scarce to-day," she told him, with conventional aloofness, "that one cannot fail to be interested by them. . . . And you are a great man," she added, earnestly. "That is, you were once."

Her words startled West. They also made him uncomfortable; but he managed to ask, lightly: "You are referring to my first books?"

She did not change her manner. "Your first books—yes. I have not forgotten them. You, unfortunately, have. . . . Oh, there is no need to pretend, with me. I read one of them just the other day—after I had finished your latest novel. You ought to do the same."

"I have," he confessed. "I did it this last week."

"And yet, you are not blushing!" Her voice was mocking, and she was smiling again. Then she whimsically quoted a passage from Verlaine:

"Qu'as-tu fait, ô toi que voilà
Pleurant sans cesse
Dis, qu'as-tu fait, toi que voilà
De ta jeunesse?"

"How do you know I am weeping?" West felt his humiliation, but assumed an air of indifference.

Evelyn Naesmith answered merely with a slight shrug. The curtain had risen again. The man was relieved, and turned his eyes, with simulated interest, to the performance. But he saw and heard little of it. His mind was too busy with retrospection. From time to time he glanced critically at the woman beside him; and there was something in his eyes that bordered on longing. Once she looked up, as if she were conscious of his scrutiny. She met his gaze with an expression of sorrowful reprimand; then turned immediately away.

At supper in the Savoy that night, they again sat together. A subtle, unspoken intimacy had grown up between them. West no longer attempted to masquerade in her presence; and she, aware of this concession, talked to him frankly, although there was little opportunity for prolonged exchange of personalities. When they were about to part, she leaned toward him.

"Forgive me for all I have said. I cannot believe that you haven't suffered, and are not suffering. If I had been kind, I suppose, I should not have brought the subject up—I should have helped you to forget it."

"There is nothing to forgive." He spoke almost inaudibly, as he helped her on with her coat. "I am glad I came to-night."

"I didn't look for you," she answered, "especially as there was a Beethoven recital elsewhere."

"I was in no mood for it," West told her. . . . "And you—why did you not prefer Beethoven?"

"It's a little awkward going alone."

The members of their party were now at the door, where their carriages awaited them.

"I shall be at the Stratton's tea Tuesday," she said, as he assisted her into her coupé.

Others thronged round them, saying good-night and exchanging parting pleasantries, and he had no opportunity to answer her. But when he took her hand, he knew he would make it a point to see her Tuesday.

As he drove home, Alice West put her hand on his. He was startled by the fact that he resented her action.

"The music was wonderful to-night, wasn't it!" she exclaimed happily. He did not answer, save with a forced smile; and she ran on gaily, talking about the opera and the singers, expressing her preference for this or that performer.

West listened to her like one in a dream. Her manner irritated him; her words disturbed his mood.

"What a curious looking woman Miss Naesmith is!" his wife remarked, as they drew near to their home. "But she's very bright—don't you think so? . . . What in the world were you and she talking about so seriously?"

"My books," West answered, coldly.

Alice West smiled contentedly.

"I am so proud of you!" she said, taking his hand in both of hers.

That night West lay awake a long time, thinking over his new experience. His resentment of Evelyn Naesmith struggled with her fascination for him. Her words had not affected him as Seminoff's letter had done. His friend's remarks had been destructive and final: they held out no hope. With the woman it was different. He was aware of her sympathy and her personal interest in him. Then there was the lure of her sex. Her intellectual appeal seemed bound up in her physical attractiveness. He could not repudiate one without repudiating the other; and he believed that, no matter what she took

away from him, she nevertheless was able to compensate him. Was it inspiration? West laughed a little at the idea. Had he ever been inspired by women? He had found no help in Irene Brenner. Surely there had been none in Margaret Moore. And his wife? After all, what had she done for him? Where had her influence led him? He had fallen into decadence because of her. His present sufferings were due directly to her love and the force of her ideals. One by one, beginning with his mother, the women who had crossed his life had taken something vital out of it, and had replaced that vitality with a commodity which did not gratify him. Only recently had he become conscious of these things. And so bitter had his heart grown that, despite Evelyn Naesmith's uncommonness, he regarded her with scepticism. Yet the fact remained that she was different, that her ideals matched his, that she was able to look into his mind and sense his despair. Instinctively he knew that he needed help, a source of solace, a fountain-head from which he could regain the energy and power he had lost.

Tuesday he went to her without a thought of what the consequences might be. He went to her as he might have gone to a book whose passages had the ability to fire and uplift him. And he went to her with a certain dread, for, after all, it was not rehabilitation he desired, but some power that could blot out the memory of Seminoff's letter and set him back once again into the easy and comfortable routine of his recent life.

There were many people at the tea, and he was able to sit with her in an alcove of the sun-parlour without being noticed. There were other important men of letters present, and he was not so conspicuous as otherwise he might have been. Circumstances permitted him to be alone with the woman for over half an hour. She was unusually gentle. Her aggressive manner had been dropped; and, as West watched her and listened to her talk, he came to the conclusion that her customary initia-

tive was only a pose, a glass wall which she threw up between her and the world. He, in turn, assumed no affectation. He did not attempt to defend himself or his past actions. He knew that she would see through any disguise he might have adopted. He was more honest with her than he had been since his last interview with Seminoff. The woman assumed, with naturalness, her knowledge of him; and her words carried the effect of genuine sympathy.

"I understand so well the circumstances of your life," she said. "For years I have watched you more closely than you imagine. I watched your work—I read everything you wrote. I saw the influences of your environment creep into it. The freedom of the mind demands freedom in actions as well—don't you see what I mean?" She looked at him through narrowed lids. "True understanding is the rarest thing in the world," she commented, after a pause. "It implies a willingness on the part of those who love you to sacrifice everything, if, by so doing, they can help you follow your dream."

"What man can find such understanding?" West replied, conscious of the implication in her words. "It is not as if we were merely intellectuals. We're not. Biology, training, instincts, sexual needs, physical appetites—all these must enter into the problem. Even should a man find a woman who could give him the mental stimulus he needed, and who was willing to give up everything for his advancement, it would be a miracle if that woman was also able to supply his physical and social needs. Life is a constant compromise between a man's brain and his body. One part of him must inevitably suffer."

The woman did not reply.

"Then again," he went on, "there is the demand our morality of pity makes on us. Have we the right to wreck the lives of those about us for our own personal gain? A man who would deliberately murder those

who love him would pay for it in suffering and remorse."

"That is the coward's point of view," the woman announced calmly. "We can justify all weakness on that ground. Already the world has invented pleasing names for its cowardices, and has turned its weaknesses into virtues." She looked up. "Do you convince yourself by such hypocrisy?"

West thought a long time.

"Perhaps I don't convince myself," he said, at length, slowly. "But I am not sufficiently convinced from the other point of view to carry out my desires with a ruthless and devastating hand."

"In other words," she supplied, "it's weakness, and not conviction that binds you to mediocrity. . . . Tell me; if you changed your course, would these others that you speak of suffer more than you are suffering? And is not the present loss to the world greater than it would be if you stood forth, defiant and brutal, and gave birth to the best in you?"

"I am a man, and I can bear the suffering," he answered, resolutely. "The others are women, and they could not understand. They are unable——"

She interrupted him with a quiet, derisive laugh.

"Surely, you have not fallen to that depth!" she exclaimed. "Do you have to answer me with platitudes and falsehoods? Are you assuming that I have a middle-class mind that will accept seriously such an explanation? . . . I believe you are becoming converted to the viewpoint of your own novels!"

She smiled tauntingly, and West felt his cheeks grow hot under her gaze.

"At any rate," he persisted, "you are a woman. Would you like to be struck down, without knowing why you had been dealt the blow—especially if it came from one you loved?"

"I refuse to be classed with other women," she an-

swered, in a bantering tone. "However, I have no pity for them. If they are too selfish and stupid to understand the worth-while things in life, why should they be pampered and coddled and permitted to burn others at the stake in order to insure their own insignificant serenity?" She dropped her light manner, and said gravely: "But if I loved a man, there is no depth of humiliation and disgrace to which I would not be willing to sink for him. I would be his slave in everything. I would let him use me for his own ends, in whatever manner he chose. If my life would assure his success, I would give it to him gladly. . . . But I would have to know that he was worthy of it. And I would know it—I would know it before I loved him."

West regarded her with a feeling of awe. A change had come over her. She no longer gave forth the impression of self-sufficiency. There was even humiliation in the attitude of her body, her limp, upturned hands, her slightly bowed head, the curve of her back. Her voice had rung with sombre intensity; and it was difficult for him to realize that the woman now at his side was the same one who had been scoffing at him ten minutes before. All conventions seemed to have fallen from them. Scarcely realizing what he did, he reached over and put his hand on the lower part of her arm, which was bare. For a moment neither of them spoke. Then he rose quickly, as if the spell which held him had been broken. She rose, too; and they walked into the main room, where they joined the others.

XXVII

For the next two days West found it impossible to trace the intolerable currents and cross-currents of his mind. He was conscious only that an all permeating dilemma had entered into his life. There was a constant conflict between his wife and child and home, on the one side, and, on the other, some intangible thing which made a wider and severer demand upon him. It was not merely a clash between his love for his wife, and his ambitions. This new impulse was more intimate, even more physical, than a remote desire for achievement. The big, inviting house, its quiet and artistic furnishings, the round of social diversions, the reiteration of friends —all these constitutive elements of his existence were revealed to him in their true inconsequential light. They took on an aspect of injustice. They were impediments in the way of a more glorious destiny. They frustrated the exercise of his greater capacities. He no longer regarded his wife with tenderness and compassion. She appeared to him like an enemy whose love was only a mantle to hide her true nature. She epitomized the life of the unessentials, the life which, in a thousand different ways, aims at stifling the heroic spirit and the soaring intelligence of mankind. Out and beyond this life, he could feel the urgent callings of a greater sphere, one without trammels or compromise, one in which the impulses might escape from all that was petty and unimportant. Evelyn Naesmith was, in his eyes, the feminine embodiment of this other life.

West felt himself drawn to her by a profound and irrevocable fascination. Her attraction for him was like

nothing he had experienced before. If in her there was a sexual appeal, there was also something else which qualified and modified his physical desire. She was the first woman with whom he had felt entirely at ease, with whom he had not been called upon to practise temperamental deceits. In large measure she compensated for his paucity of masculine companionship. He remembered how, immediately after his marriage, he had felt keenly the vacancy left by Seminoff. But now he was aware of no psychological want. Evelyn Naesmith rounded out his nature. She appeared intuitively to know his needs, and to have the capacity of supplying them. He had never been entirely frank with any other woman. His sexual relationships had been in the nature of a game; and he had played that game both consciously and unconsciously. Several times he had attempted a frank and whole-hearted honesty with his wife. But the results of these adventures into frankness had been painful, and, as a consequence, he had begun a consistent drama of tactful deception. He rarely gave free rein to his moods, and, in time, came to view himself and the world from his wife's standpoint. It was not until he met Evelyn Naesmith that he realized how far this self-deceit had gone. In her presence he could look back on himself and his life as from a mountain peak. She discouraged all hypocrisy and sham.

It was because of what he thought the impersonal nature of her appeal that he was able to justify himself in seeing her often. He deliberately planned to attend teas and receptions when he knew she would be there. Once he even suggested to his wife that she be included in a dinner invitation. But after a week or two he did not limit himself to public meetings with her. They were rarely satisfactory because there were continual interruptions and a constant feeling of the nearness of outside influences. Their friendship had developed rapidly, there being no conventions of attitude to overcome. Their

talk rapidly grew more intimate and personal. One day she sent him a note, asking him to tea at her apartment. She did not include his wife in the invitation, and there was something in her words that made him believe the omission had been deliberate. He went to her, and found her alone.

"You will forgive me—won't you, Stanford—for doing this?" she said, extending her hand as he entered. It was the first time that she had ever called him by his first name, and that fact, more than the circumstances of the situation, made him feel guilty of disloyalty to his wife.

"It is so difficult to talk when there are others around," she added, noting his surprise.

Her words brought back his affair with Margaret Moore. This other woman, too, had sent for him and, on the same pretext, had received him alone. But only in the externals did he sense any parallelism between the two episodes.

"I might not have come," he told her, smiling lightly, "had I known this beforehand. But, now that I am here, I shall not scold you."

Evelyn Naesmith's apartment had an air of unconventional richness. The living-room was lined with books. The walls were a warm grey, and the heavy, patternless carpet was grey also. Each piece of furniture was an odd bit of Oriental carving, exotic in shape and character. There were many oil paintings about—distorted figure compositions, bizarre modern landscapes, allegorical pieces, brilliant scenes from the South Sea Islands. Two great carved figures of horses in ebony—specimens of the architectonic art of Egypt—stood at either side of the door. An antique predella, filled with primitive figures, rested on the mantel, and extended to the ceiling.

An Indian servant, in his native costume, wheeled in a service of Turkish coffee, and withdrew immediately.

West now, for the first time, became conscious of the woman's physical appeal. He had almost convinced himself that he regarded her solely as an intellectual entity, and that her sex was incidental. He now knew this to be false, and became suddenly aware of the danger of their relationship. During his married life his sexual nature had approached quiescence. Like his outlook, it had become conventionalized. Of late he had looked upon his early love affairs as imaginative extravagances of youth. Sensualism seemed too remote, even for speculation, from his new order of existence. His sense of obligatory loyalty to his family had played a large part in the subjugation of his physical impulses. Just as the influences of his mature life had dominated the passions of his mind, so had they dominated the passions of his body. But now, without warning, Evelyn Naesmith had again started the hot stirrings in his blood. The swift emotions, which for years had lain dormant, assailed him with their old vigour. Time fell from him like a cloak; the intoxications of sex which had haunted him in his university days began once more their disquieting activities. And simultaneously his old intellectual desires leapt into life. His stimulated body seemed to act as an incitement to his brain.

Evelyn Naesmith poured his coffee in silence, and passed it to him.

"Surely, you are not going to be guilty of conventional regrets," she remarked, reprovingly. "You are not alienated from your early ideals to that extent, are you? You wrote searchingly on the meretriciousness of conventions once. I had thought—even hoped—that the present change in you was superficial, not fundamental."

West was slightly abashed. He could not deny her point of view unless he repudiated all his inner beliefs; and, for the moment, these beliefs were stronger than his instincts of propriety.

"What can I say?" he answered wearily. "Every de-

sire in me bids me obey you. It is foolish to attempt secrecy with you. You are the only woman in the world who knows my tragedy. But why should you seek to take advantage of it?"

"The peaceful dreamer, perhaps, resents being roused to a life of action?" She looked at him, a bit craftily. "Are you, after all, a lotus-eater?"

"An enforced lotus-eater, perhaps." He leaned back in his chair, and looked directly ahead of him. "I believe there comes a time when the drug victim is insusceptible to cure. In that event, the sufferings of attempted rehabilitation are only futile. . . . You see, if I had met you years ago——"

"Before you were married?"

"Just that!" He swung round and leaned toward her. "With you, there is nothing I could not have done. Your mind stimulates me. My brain works easily when I am with you—it is free of trammels."

"And the—other part of you?" Her voice was low: her eyes turned to him, slowly and mesmerically.

He rose quickly, like a man who finds himself falling into hypnosis and recovers himself at the brink of his coma.

"Don't!" he commanded, brusquely. "You know my answer to that question, without my putting it into words. You knew it, probably, before I did myself."

"Yes," she answered, with scorn, "as well as I knew the impulses which have kept you bound to a trivial and weakly existence of law-abiding negation and second-rate prosperity."

"I am afraid those impulses have become too strong to be overcome now." His words were spoken with embittered finality. Then he added: "Even by you."

"You need not soften your confession of cowardice with a compliment." There was still a little scorn in her voice. "The only thing that stands in the way of your future is your own lethargy of character."

During the past weeks West had been cognizant of this truth. More and more he had grown to feel his ability to do great things. What he needed, he told himself, was a proper environment where his hopes for an understanding and a reciprocity in the spiritual companionship for which he longed, would be fulfilled. He realized that it had been the hopelessness of his life's outlook under the influence of Alice West that had smothered the ambitions of his earlier days; and it was now impossible for him to deny the rejuvenating faith of Evelyn Naesmith. The basic urgings in his being were toward combat. He knew, too, that after his marriage his struggles had been mere mechanical operations, with but occasional bursts of that old unquenchable energy which had permeated his younger years. But during his brief intimacy with the woman now before him, the old flame had burned, the old ambitions dominated. There was a consciousness of kind and a like-mindedness between them; and also there was that primitive unintellectual attraction which reaches out blindly in its hunger.

He sat down, and for some time gazed at her steadily across the table before answering her remark.

"You have reversed the order of things." He spoke at length, affectedly. "Should I not be the one to coerce?"

"Please don't, Stanford!" she cried, pleadingly. It was his tone and manner that she resented.

He understood her well, for he had been aware of the cheapness of his words the moment they had been uttered.

In the silence that had followed her appeal they had been precipitated onto a different plane. Their love for each other was as common knowledge as if both had confessed it openly. West's hand dropped to the table, and his head fell forward.

"I know it is hard." The woman spoke softly. "I know how you feel—now. . . . It would mean ostra-

cism. But ostracism by whom? Those beneath you, those whose ideals are beneath yours."

She looked at him, but he did not move. Gently she put her hand on his. He held it firmly for a moment, releasing it with a quick impulsive movement. The contact had thrilled him. He knew, with ultimate truth, the greatness of his possibilities. He had felt it for the one brief instant when his fingers clung to hers; and the revelation stunned him.

"What folly—what diabolical folly!" he murmured, as if to himself.

She regarded him eagerly.

"And now—what of *my* suffering if you deny me your love?" she asked.

"You knew—beforehand—the futility of such a thing," he argued. "You have no right to blame me. But the other one did not know. She has given me the best of which she is capable. Must she be disgraced because she has fallen short, through no fault of hers?"

"Think of what you are saying!" The woman moved nearer to him. "Then recall the things you once wrote."

"Don't make it hard for me," West begged. "My wife has never given me cause to say one word against her. She has lived up to her duty as she has seen it. She gives me all she has to give—a great and trusting love. But she does not understand my deeper needs. It is nothing against her that she cannot see as far as you can. She has imposed a debt on me."

"Then, why are you here with me now?" Before he could answer, she reached over and took his hand again. "Ah! Can you deny that you love me?"

"No!" he exclaimed. "Why should I deny it? It would be the basest falsehood. I want nothing in the world so much as I want you. In you lies my salvation."

She buried her head in her arm, and drew his fingers to her lips. After a moment she glanced up, her face flushed.

"And I love you—irrevocably—eternally," she breathed. "Your duty—our duty—lies toward the world, in what you can give it. For that I am willing to do whatever you say—to go with you wherever you wish me to go."

He studied her longingly. The twilight had settled about them. A mist of passion hung over her eyes.

From the other room there came a slight noise as of someone lighting the lamps. Then a roseate glow fell through the Venetian glass panels of the door. It seemed to call West back to the bleak realities as from the ecstasy of a dream.

He arose unsteadily.

"I must go now." His voice was unnatural.

"Not yet," she pleaded, coming close to him.

She watched him waver; and all the while she was reading his mind, plainly, unmistakably. She knew that he was fighting against the impulses which held men captive to the motives of comfortable inanition, that he was nearer the brink of indecision than he thought she even guessed. Intuition told her that no words of hers could add strength to either of the conflicting forces within him; so she waited, her breast rising and falling quickly under the stress of excited sorrow.

West caught the magnetism of her body. He took her in his arms and pressed her to him. For a long time he held her thus, and then put her away from him roughly.

"That's the end!" he said, and went out.

XXVIII

For over a week West clung to his resolution not to see her again. He suffered much; he was unable to work, for he could not concentrate his mind even on the facile occupation of novel writing. So completely had he lost interest in his writing that he believed he never again would be able to supply the demands of his market. He was unfitted for going on as he had been, and he was unable to obey his impulse for serious labour. He realized that matters could not continue in their present state; yet he could arrive at no conclusive course of action. He believed he was drifting surely toward some momentous climax, but the exact nature of it he was unable to determine. The only fact which was clear to him was that life had become unmerciful and severe. And the longer he remained away from Evelyn Naesmith, the more insupportable it grew.

He determined on a temporary compromise. He would not give up his wife and his daughter, and he could not give up the other woman. He went to her again clandestinely. He tried to explain to her his predicament, but she halted him.

"I know all you are going to say," she remarked hopelessly. "You want me, but you are unwilling to pay the price of having me. Therefore, I am to have only a part of you. I am to be content with an intrigue of secrecy. . . . Well, I love you enough to accept even that."

She did not urge him to alter his decision. She did not so much as find fault with him. She treated him as if he were a child who needed guidance and comfort and

protection. She accepted the situation on his own terms.

After that, he saw her often. More and more he felt the need of her. They met regularly in public, at the houses of friends, even at his own house. Under this last condition she sensed his guilty humiliation, and, after one or two visits, graciously declined all of Alice West's invitations. West understood these refusals, and was grateful to her. But less than ever did he find pleasure in being with her in the company of others. The falsity of their formal meetings were distasteful to him. His feeling of culpability was such that he was uncomfortable whenever necessity demanded the dishonesty of attitudinizing. As a result, he spent much of his time alone with her in her apartment, and his visits grew more frequent as time went by and their intimacy grew. His wife did not question his absences. She trusted him implicitly. In their relationship there had always been a reserve and formality which permitted him a freer range of action than had all barriers been down. Once, however, he had had to lie to her. Not only did this pain him, but it impressed upon him the injustice of his surreptitiousness.

West did not find the satisfaction in Evelyn Naesmith that he thought would be his. He was too unsettled; too many conflicting demands were being made upon him. His hours with her were merely oases in the long stretches of his social desert. It became increasingly difficult for him to go from her when the hour grew late. When he was away from her, he was more miserable than he had been before she came into his life. The tender attitude of his wife disconcerted him. The presence of his child caused him pangs of unhappiness. His home became little more than a necessary refuge in which to house himself between those rare, peaceful evenings when he drove out to Chelsea to the woman he had come to love.

In his eagerness and longing to be with her, he be-

came less and less discreet. One day he had motored with her to Kew Gardens and had dined with her in a little inn in Surrey. He had seen no one he knew; but during the following week he heard that several people had spoken casually of his interest in the woman. After that he was more careful. But he could not undo his former indiscretion, and, because of his prominence and the atmosphere of mystery which had always hung over Evelyn Naesmith, there were many who were willing, even eager, to talk on the slightest cause. This cause he had given them; and it was not long before he was the subject of considerable good-natured gossip. Once, as he had entered the lounge room at the club, he had overheard his name mentioned and, shortly afterward, the name of Evelyn Naesmith. He had no definite proof that the men whose words he had caught were discussing his unconventional alliance; but, when he approached, the men suddenly ceased their talk, and rose to greet him with an effusiveness not altogether spontaneous.

After that he began to wonder if any rumours had come to his wife, and watched her closely for any word or action which might indicate that she had heard of his affair with the woman. After a week he was convinced that she was innocent of the talk going on about her. He was astonished a little later at the fact that her innocence caused him disappointment and uneasiness. His instinct was toward honesty, and one night he wondered if it was not better for his wife to know at least a part of the real facts. It was his scrupulousness, not his wisdom, which had motivated this speculation; and the next morning he decided that her ignorance was, after all, the best thing.

Yet he worried as to how the affair would end. He tried to convince himself that the problem would be solved without scandal, but no definite possibilities presented themselves. Of course, Alice West might die. That thought came to him one night on his way home

from Evelyn Naesmith. He was horrified that he should have thought of it, and a tremendous emotion of criminal remorse arose in him when he discovered that secretly he would have welcomed such an escape from his difficulties. Had it been within his power to bring about such an event, he would have shrunk from it as from a grossly flagitious act, but, when he contemplated her death as the result of an unescapable destiny, he experienced an involuntary sensation of relief. He felt that there was treachery in his attitude, and the fact grieved him; but he was unable to put it from him, and it was not long before his wife's possible death became with him a formulated hope.

Once, when he was attending a dinner at the club, a page hurried up to him and informed him that he was wanted immediately on the telephone. The unusualness of the event brought at once to his mind the suggestion of some serious catastrophe of which his wife was the victim. Excusing himself, he answered the call in a state of mind wherein fear and pleasurable expectancy were equally mingled. It was with a shock of disappointment that he heard Alice West's voice answering him. The matter for which she had called him was of small relative importance; and for the rest of the evening he was overcast with a spirit of melancholy. For a week thereafter he hated himself for these emotions, and his reaction took the form of unusual tenderness and devotion toward the woman he had vowed to love and cherish. He was conscious of having done her a great, inexplicable injury, and he sought to compensate her for it by innumerable minor attentions.

The days passed without so much as a rift in the ambient gloom of the situation. He was sinking deeper and deeper into the sloughs of a tragic predicament. And, to make matters worse, the gossip about him, which had started in frivolous tone, gradually changed its character. It became more or less serious and, in some instances,

disagreeable. People no longer joked about his interest in Evelyn Naesmith. They now commenced to condemn his actions.

The woman herself was not unaware of what was being said, although she had refrained from mentioning it to West. But finally one night she brought up the subject.

"Don't you see," she asked him, at the end of a futile discussion, "that this thing cannot go on as it is? The little world we live in will make it impossible for us to continue. We are face to face with the necessity of some definite decision. I needn't tell you that."

West thought a long time. Every answer that presented itself to him was conventional and ineffectual.

"Evelyn," he said, at length, desperately, "you know as well as I, that there is a difference in the codes of morals that determine the character of a man and woman. A woman may change her mind, deliberately lie, wantonly break contracts into a thousand pieces, but, so long as she remains virtuous as men apply the word, just so long is she revered. A man, on the other hand, is judged by his adherence to the clauses of a compact into which he enters. His chastity, like a woman's integrity, is considered secondary. If it were not for my oaths, this night would be the beginning of a new and splendid existence. I have no God, no religion, save my word and what it embodies."

She held up a restraining hand.

"Don't go on—don't lower yourself to such a level! You are indeed desperate if you must resort to such petty sophistry."

"I am ashamed of myself," he answered in a low voice. "Of course, those are not my reasons for hesitating."

"Your one reason is weakness," she answered him, angrily, "a weakness which has been forced upon you

by others. . . . And as for promises—is it impossible for you to be released from your obligations?"

He stared at her, amazed.

"You would have me tell her!"

"Why not?"

He rose with sudden resolution.

"I shall come back to you to-morrow." He spoke in a strained, determined voice.

The next morning after breakfast he went into the library with his wife.

"I am going to have a little heart-to-heart talk with you," he said. His manner was severe, and his face was drawn from lack of sleep.

"I'd love that, dear," Alice West answered, with semi-lightness. "We see so little of each other these days. Sometimes, I wish we were just poor people, living back in Greenwood."

"I have come to the conclusion," he began, ignoring her comments, "that I want to write a different kind of book from my novels—the kind that once made you unhappy."

She looked at him, startled, without speaking.

"I feel that I must write them," West continued. "And you know what that will mean. It will mean a change in our lives. It will mean a loss of friends. It will mean deprivation and sacrifices. It will even mean, perhaps, that I must go away where I will be entirely free to think and plan. . . . Do you love me enough to agree to that?"

She had been watching him in pained amazement. There was no doubt as to the earnestness of his resolve.

"It isn't a question of my love for you, dear." Her grief was poignant and manifested itself in her voice. "It's a question of your love for me. Would you be willing to sacrifice deliberately all that you have gained, all that I mean to you, our home, our little girl—everything, for the sake of a few books which would bring you only

disgrace? . . . Don't you see it is not for me to make the decision? It rests with your own conscience. You will do whatever you decide. . . . And yet—and yet, I don't believe you will do what you say. I don't believe you will throw away your greatness, and ruin yourself and—us. If you do, I know you will regret it. You will pay with the most terrible suffering."

West resented her words. They embittered him toward her. They seemed shallow and lacking in all comprehension of his needs. They acted on him like an argument against her, and in favour of his own desires. Why should he be under obligation to her when she was ignorant of his very animating instincts? What right had she to bind him to a life against which he revolted? Even though she could not understand him, should she not be willing to accept him on faith—to follow blindly where he might choose to lead, to give herself over into his keeping, to make whatever sacrifices he demanded?

He rose, and walked slowly round in front of her.

"Suppose——" his voice was firm, and his eyes held hers—"suppose I wanted to go away with someone who understood my aspirations and who was willing to accept the disgrace that went with their fulfilment?"

"Stanford!" His wife's body seemed to go limp, and she looked at him as if he had turned suddenly into a monster.

He realized that the time had come for him to be decisive. He must either repudiate his words as the emanations of a fantastic mood, or he must go on and tell her the truth. He did not hesitate now. He almost hated the woman before him. He received actual stimulation from her obvious suffering.

"Listen!" he said, almost roughly. "I have come to you and I have tried to make you understand. I have given you every chance. For years you have thwarted every aspiring instinct of my being. You have held me down to a life of pettiness. Your influence has forced

me to write what was abhorrent to me. You are accountable for my spiritual degradation—Oh, I am not blaming you! You knew no better. But the fact remains that you have robbed me of the highest and the best within me. I have become a cheap popular idol to gratify your vanity—the vanity which is in every good and noble woman like you. You have bankrupted my youth. You have made me a slave, just as truly as if you had put me in chains. . . . I can stand it no longer. I have found a woman who does not want from me the things that you want, who is willing to suffer isolation and ostracism, disgrace and humiliation, for the sake of my rehabilitation—a woman who understands the innermost promptings of my nature—a thing you have never understood. She has opened my eyes to my contemptible weakness, to my cowardly evasion of the ultimate realities. She is willing to sacrifice all she has for my sake if I will give up the horrible hypocrisy of my present existence. . . . Now you know the truth."

He glared at her in a kind of frantic triumph.

Alice West's hands dropped to her lap. Her eyelids drooped a little, and the corners of her mouth sagged as with the exhaustion of illness. She regarded her husband with infinite pity. She was like a mother who had discovered that her only son was a criminal.

"And what do you propose to do, Stanford?" Her voice was tender and forgiving.

Shame consumed him, and his eyes fell before hers.

"What is there to do?"

"You will go away with her," his wife said, simply and hopelessly, "and if you want me to divorce you and leave you free, I shall do that, too. . . . But I shall always love you—and pray that your sorrow and regret —will not—be too great——"

Tears poured from her eyes unheeded.

West tried to reply, but agony constricted his throat. He went from her without a word.

XXIX

Two days later West and Evelyn Naesmith went to Paris. The *débâcle* of Alice West's life had been swift and complete. She had had two interviews with her husband before he went away. They were brief and devoid of any emotional outbursts. An agreement as to what course each would pursue had been arrived at, or, rather, West had suggested what he thought best, and his wife had agreed humbly, without so much as a tentative protestation. Obviously, her life in London would be impossible after her husband's departure. She was to return to America at once, taking the child with her, to establish a new home with West's mother. When a year had passed, she was to follow her own inclination as to whether or not she desired a divorce. They discussed the matter calmly, with the child as the basis of consideration. West did not demand the sacrifice of a legal separation, leaving the decision entirely in her hands. Personally he cared little one way or another. Evelyn Naesmith, he knew, would make no conventional demands on him, and if it was possible for his wife to benefit herself and child by deception, he agreed to put no obstacle in her way.

The financial and business details connected with closing his affairs in London were placed in professional hands. All the necessary instructions regarding packing and shipments were left to an agent who would assume full responsibility and relieve Alice West of any annoyance which might arise. West turned over his entire estate in his wife's name. It was not a large estate, for he had lived nearly up to the limit of his income; but he

deemed it sufficient to guarantee his family ease and comfort for many years to come. When it should be entirely dissipated, he believed vaguely that he would again be able to give her financial aid.

These affairs being settled, he went at once to Paris. Evelyn Naesmith had lived much of her life in the French capital, and West himself was not altogether a stranger to that city. Both understood thoroughly the nature of the life which lay before them, and the circumstances under which their destiny was to be worked out. They decided on the quarter of Paris in which they wished to live, and, since it was now drawing toward the end of September, when leases were issued, they did not have to wait in order to establish themselves permanently. They found a pleasant and desirable apartment on the Rue Notre Dame des Champs, almost within sight of the Petit Luxembourg and the Fontaine Carpeaux. The main room was a large atelier giving on to a small Italian garden. There was a spacious *soupente* from which one could enter the smaller rooms. A circular stairway had been built up from the main room to the balcony, behind which was a small *salon*. The apartment was so arranged, by means of a rear stairway and an extra entrance from the garden, that the studio could be kept isolated, as much so as if it had been in another building.

"This is to be your retreat, dear," Evelyn Naesmith told West, when they had first stood in it together. "You can be alone whenever you wish, and as long as you wish. I will always be near you, and when you want me, you can come to me. . . . This room shall be the scene of your great work. Out of it shall come splendid, daring books."

West was not entirely happy. He could not shake from him the memory of his wife. He could not stifle his regrets or quench the sense of tragedy which had hung over him since the morning he had gone to Alice

West and confessed his love for this other woman. But the step had now been taken: there was no turning back, and he endeavoured to convince himself that time would heal his pain. In his misery he was buoyed up by the immediate prospects of his new life. The hot aspiration to work fortified his mind with subtle intoxications. The calm and invigorating presence of Evelyn Naesmith strengthened him and gave him confidence. He was resolved now to fight and struggle toward that goal which had once been emblazoned across the skies of his youth.

The winter passed quickly and serenely. His life was almost commonplace in its uneventfulness. One day in the late autumn Evelyn Naesmith had encountered accidentally an old acquaintance, the editor of a somewhat radical but influential *Revue*. This man had been one of the first to protest against the cry of *"communard"* which had gone up at Cézanne's entrance into the field of painting, and the younger revolutionary artists had been taken under his protecting wing and treated with courtesy and consideration when their work warranted it. He had clashed with the critics on the subject of such composers as Strauss and Debussy. In the literary field, as well, he had opened his pages to all serious modern effort. He was well along in years, and in his youth had won the Prix de Rome. The dignity of his age and bearing lent weight to his publication, and he had been called the æsthetic father of the younger iconoclasts.

West was astonished to learn that this man was not ignorant of his early books, and, in the months following their first meeting, they had visited each other often. As a result, West had met a number of the men who were quietly and seriously attempting to revolutionize the art of the schools. As often as once a week, there had been informal gatherings of four or five of the heretical leaders, either at his studio, or at the offices of the *Revue*. Then there had been concerts by semi-private orchestras,

unofficial exhibitions of paintings, and subscription theatricals at which the plays of unpopular dramatists were produced. These diversions were his sole reactions against the monotony of hard work.

As he had hoped, a curtain of distance and time fell between him and his past. He recovered quickly from his grief. The memory of his life with Alice West had become a mere mirage. It lost its intimacy, growing more and more impersonal. He was completely absorbed in his labours. The freedom of his new existence produced a corresponding freedom in his mind. The old doubts and longings were dispersed, and with them the influences which had brought about his undoing. There were times now when he felt that he had realized the dearest of his dreams: he had at last installed himself in the visionary castle of his early days. The idea which, in his youth, he had caressed had now taken on form and substance. He was constantly in a valiant mood, and his lively alternating need for music, conversation, quietude and effort was supplied by his present environment. His re-entry into the life of intellectual competition stimulated and developed his every energy. He could look out into the future as into the face of a glorious dawn.

His work, however, did not go on rapidly. The desuetude of his powers had been of too long duration for immediate recovery. But this fact did not make him unhappy. His mind was clogged with years of mental slavery. In time, he knew, he would throw them off. His actual accomplishments were small, but the unfolding of his dream, despite its tediousness, was perfect. His present work consisted largely of adversaria. These he would arrange and amplify as his mind caught up the trail of analytic suggestion. Before the winter had passed he had a complete skeleton for a new book—the co-ordinated structure; and there remained only the labour of supplying the flesh. He had passed the middle of

his thirties, but his voice had become younger with a nervous ardour. His eyes were fiery and confident. When he talked, his language was exuberant, his gestures spirited. His brain overflowed with discoveries and intuitions, expectant aspirations and organized energies.

When he considered his condition and warmed his hopes round the flame of his desires, the realization forced its way in upon him that Evelyn Naesmith was playing only a minor part in the actual process of his rebirth. During most of the day he was in solitude; and after the first month of his work in Paris, there was a decided slackening of his inclination to seek her approval and sympathy. At first, he had talked to her much of his hopes and plans. He had discussed with her each evening his progress during the day. He had come to her with the schemes for his books, and had found a satisfaction in her enthusiasm. But, as his ideas had evolved, his instinct toward solitude had grown, and, when he sat at dinner after the labours of the day, it had latterly been her questions and expressions of interest that had drawn from him the information which previously he had given voluntarily.

At the outset, his inspiration had seemed to come from the woman herself, as from an external agency; but the more sedulously he applied himself and the more animated he became with the desire for attainment, the less she seemed to have a part in his work. Before the spring arrived he rarely discussed his work with her. Long silences crept into their relationship. When they talked, it was on trivial affairs or matters outside of their immediate domain. She still questioned him occasionally as to the progress he was making and asked him to show her what he had done. But his answers were always brief. There was even a tendency on his part to discourage her inquiries. When he forced himself to share his thoughts with her, he did it without his old enthusiasm. And when she took issue with him on certain points or

showed a tendency toward suggestion, he listened carelessly, sometimes with an expression of slight annoyance. Her opinions no longer had weight with him, and, if he were physically tired, he would agree casually and without sincerity, in order that the argument might not be prolonged.

Despite his mental withdrawal, there was no lessening in his affection for her. It merely put that affection on a different plane—a plane astonishingly similar to that on which his previous affairs with women had been based. The intellectual appeal in her, which at first had attracted him, became less and less potent, until finally it had nearly died out. He was too deeply submerged in his work to question this change, or to take more than cursory note of it. His contentment remained the same. Within himself he found all the resources he needed to inspire him to new processes of thought. Evelyn Naesmith had been like a medicine. During his sickness and subnormality she had, through her influence and appeal, lifted him out of his spiritual illness and infused him with a semblance of health. Therefore, by attributing his exuberance to her presence, he had come to consider her a necessity to his well-being. But when he had gained his normality—when it had become a matter of internal adjustment—he no longer needed her curative services to keep him to his path of ambition. West was not aware of the process which had brought about his condition, for the woman, in some way, still meant much to him. She was the symbol of his freedom, and that symbol he mistook for the permanent causative reality.

XXX

Spring came and, with it, a subtle unrest. A disturbance crept into his life. It was an invisible and indefinable thing—little more than a spark of consciousness that some unknown influence was at work. In the midst of his writing he would look out into the garden with a feeling of restlessness; and when he attempted to concentrate his mind on a particularly difficult point of reasoning, it was as if, against his will, he was being drawn away from his work. At other times he experienced a sensation similar to that which the hidden presence of someone else in the room might have produced. It was a mild and almost unnoticeable sensation—so mild, in fact, that West did not consider it worthy of speculation. Only when night came and he discovered that he had not accomplished what he had planned for the day, did he grow uneasy regarding it.

It did not occur to him to trace it to the effects of the slight alteration in Evelyn Naesmith's attitude—an alteration of which West had become aware toward the end of his first six months with her in Paris. Following his disinclination to discuss intimately with her his dreams of future achievement, she had more than once become suddenly silent, and had turned to other topics of conversation. Unconsciously relieved by her ready dismissal of his personal affairs, he had failed to notice that there had been deliberation in her choice of other subjects. Sometimes for days an attitude of indifference had seized her, and more than once she had lapsed into a sullen mood. During these depressions West had suffered an impersonal annoyance, in the same way that he

might have suffered at the inconvenient mistake of a tradesman or at a sudden shower just when he had planned to go out. His mind was too full of other and more important matters for him to give time either to introspection or self-analysis. He dismissed Evelyn Naesmith's periods of moroseness as inconsequent manifestations of some temporary discomfiture, and paid little or no conscious heed to them.

"I can't understand my disinclination to work of late," he said to her one night. "And the spring has always been my most prolific season. I feel uneasy, and in the later afternoons I become actually nervous."

"You are working too hard," the woman answered. "You need to go out more—to take more rest. You are too absorbed—you get no recreation."

"It isn't that," West remained a while in silent thought. "No, that isn't it. I have always been a hard worker. I'm happiest when I'm working. I don't do half the writing now I used to do. I haven't grown tired a single day since I've been in Paris."

The woman watched him a moment narrowly.

"I believe, Stanford," she announced in a hard, accusing voice, "that you are growing tired of me. I am not able to stimulate you any longer. You may not know it, but during the last few months you have drawn away from me. You used to come to me and talk about your work. Now you seem to resent it if I even mention the subject to you."

"That is hardly fair," West answered, uneasily. "I have been very busy."

"Yes! So busy that I have been neglected," the woman flashed back. "Maybe you don't realize that your whole attitude toward me has undergone a change. You could get along as well without me. I'm not of any service to you any more." She spoke resentfully, and looked at him with an injured air.

The unrest from which West had been suffering dur-

ing the past few weeks seized him again as he listened to her words. But now it was intensified, and arose from a specific cause. The woman herself had aroused it; and he began to understand the uneasiness which had interfered with his work. Heretofore he had been too engrossed to concern himself with the nuances and petty reactions of their temperamental relationship. The woman's words constituted the first definite statement on either his or her part, of the exact status of their mutual attitude; but he at once recognized the truth of her remarks: he no longer needed her in order to proceed in his literary labours; unconsciously he had withdrawn from her influence which, as he thought, had been the basis of their love; he had neglected her in so far as he had not shared himself with her wholly.

Evelyn Naesmith, however, had sensed the first slight alteration in their former relations. She had watched his intellectual solitude develop step by step until her relegation had been almost complete. She had not accused him openly at first, because she thought she could win him back. When all her efforts had failed, she attempted to swathe her wounded pride with indifference, and thus protect herself from the effects of his self-sufficiency. But her indifference was not genuine, and on several occasions it ran over into sullenness. This sullenness she did not attempt to overcome or disguise, for she thought West would take note of it and repent. She held the belief that, by making the atmosphere in which he lived disagreeable, she could at least attract attention to herself. Her calculations were not conscious. They were the result of a desperate impulse to turn his mind again to a consideration of her importance.

The effect of her instinctive machinations, however, was not what she had intuitively hoped. West had suffered a depression as the result of her actions, but he had not connected the two. Still dominated by the idea of the woman's sympathetic intelligence, he had sought ex-

planations in channels far removed from the true cause. Not until she herself brought him face to face with the fact that he had left her outside the gates of his intellectual life, did he begin to see the matter in its true light. As he sat looking at her across the table, he felt the imposition of a new demand—a demand which he had no inclination to obey, for, since he had no need of her help, he could not, with spontaneity and sincerity, go to her for it. Yet he knew that this was what she wanted, and that, if he did not acquiesce in the demand, unpleasantness would result.

He was confronted by an apparently unsolvable dilemma. Had he not cared deeply for the woman, the situation would have given him little worry. But so subtly had her influence permeated his life that he felt the imperative need of her in numerous ways which were in nowise connected with the actual process of his life work. She dispelled his loneliness during his hours of rest, and, even when he was busily engaged, the consciousness of her presence afforded him a certain contentment and comfort. He found in her the necessary relief from labour. She constituted a desirable orderliness in his routine. She relieved his mind of innumerable minor annoyances which, had he been alone, would have fallen on his shoulders. She compensated him for the absence of his wife and, in a measure, furnished him with a justification for having deserted his legal obligations. His nature was such that he required a sexual and social complement; and no other woman had ever gratified his material and chemical needs with such intelligent understanding. Throughout the whole of his maturity he had demanded the presence of a woman in the house, in order that the many functionings of his masculinity might be expressed. Furthermore, his physical and sentimental instincts were closely allied, and long propinquity had enhanced his affections to so high a degree that any breaking off of a relationship of this kind would have

meant untold emotional suffering. Thus had Evelyn Naesmith become the outlet of something deeply ingrained in his nature—something vital and significant and biologically operative.

"I need you now more than I ever needed you," West told her. "You are wrong when you say I could get along just as well without you. . . . Don't you understand that I have no one else in the world?"

"You have your work," the woman observed. In her voice there was resentment, even jealousy. "That, to you, is of more importance than I am. . . . I have only you."

West regarded her with mild amazement. He could not put down a sensation of anger which her words had aroused. He had always supposed that she was vitally interested in his writing, but he could see now that she, like Irene Brenner, took umbrage at the fact that it intruded upon their personal relationship. Her sudden change of attitude astonished him. The cause of it was not clear.

"Didn't you yourself encourage me in my work?" he asked her.

"It belonged to both of us then," she answered. "You shared it with me and made me feel that it was mine as well. Now it has become something apart from our love —something outside of our lives. It held us together once; now it has separated us."

West understood. It was through his creative instinct that she had gained him. His work represented a plane on which both of them could stand. Unconsciously she had used it as a weapon to attain her end. Her interest in it had not been intellectual, but personal. It had been a means of conquest, and it had served its purpose. Once her point had been won, it no longer meant anything to her. He determined to test her.

"After all," he said hopelessly, "my work matters little. It is all so futile—such a thankless task. . . .

Would you be happier if I gave up my work and tried to secure from life the immediate happiness which is every man's due? Wouldn't we both be happier? . . . During the last few months I have been asking myself that question."

He hoped she would protest. He even hoped that she would see the sham of his words and pretend to protest.

She did not answer for some time, and West watched her anxiously. At length her manner softened, and she placed her hand on his across the table.

"That is for you to decide," she said, with tender appeal. "I know how much your work means to you. If you gave it up, wouldn't you regret it? . . . Do you really think I could be all in all to you?"

The man regarded her critically. The mask had fallen from her. For the first time in his life he could read unmistakably the underlying motives of her past actions. She, too, had become an enemy to his intellectual aspirations, and the shock of this revelation stunned and embittered him. His mind flashed back to his wife, and he was conscious of an almost overwhelming pity for her—a pity and a remorse for the wrong he had done her. But at the same time he could not shake off the attraction of Evelyn Naesmith. His imagination had been inflamed by her until his system needed the stimulation which she alone could supply. She had become a habit, affecting him like a drug. No matter what his disgust for her, he craved her, and would have suffered agonies without her.

His impulse was to tell her that he had no intention of giving up his work, that his remarks had been only a test of her loyalty; but such a confession, he knew, would have infuriated her, and might have jeopardized their relationship.

"I am not certain," he answered instead. "Perhaps, for the time being, at any rate, I had better continue. At least, I want to finish the books I have begun. Then I will be able to tell just where our greatest happiness lies."

He discerned a slight cloud of disappointment on her face when he told her this; but she accepted his decision in silence. Going round the table, she sat down beside him and put her arms about him. Her action awakened in him a brutal viciousness. He felt like throwing her away from him. But, despite this fact, he was hungry for her. He could not resist her fascination. He felt repelled and attracted by her at the same time. He wanted to kiss her passionately; and also his hands ached to inflict pain on her.

After that night, his unrest was a conscious thing. His knowledge of the woman's attitude became a definite hindering force to the free exercise of his mind. He knew that inwardly she was working against him, and the fact that he wanted and needed her inclined him to heed the insistence of her silent antagonism. She saw the effect of her attitude on him, and unanalytically, almost unconsciously, she indulged in actions subtly annoying. In the mornings, when he left her to retire to his studio, she received his kiss impassively, trying to rouse his sympathy by appearing forlorn or unhappy. When his work was over for the day, she greeted him with effusive caresses, in order to impress upon him her loneliness when he was away from her. She was playing the game of sympathetic humbleness and dependence. Once or twice she had come to the studio during the day, softly and tentatively, and looked in upon him. When he spoke to her, or asked what she desired, she had crossed to him contritely.

"I don't want to disturb you, dear," she had said, "but I'm terribly lonesome. I thought perhaps you might be resting and would talk to me for a minute. . . . I didn't think you'd hear me. . . . Forgive me, won't you, dear?"

For two weeks West fought against the insidious corruption of his sentiments, against the atmosphere of depression which the woman cast about him. It made his work difficult, but he did not complain. In fact, there

was nothing against which he could protest without criticizing her affection, for she was over-sweet, and her moodiness appeared to be a direct result of the constancy of her love. One day when he reprimanded her pleasantly for disturbing him, she pretended to be deeply hurt.

"It was only because you mean so much to me that I came to you," she said, with grieved humility. "You don't know how I long for you when you are away. . . . You see, you *are* growing tired of me. You don't want my love—it only annoys you. . . . What a fool I was to think you needed me!"

She left the room sulkily.

For the rest of the afternoon West was unable to concentrate his mind. His work seemed overcast with the gloom of her memory. That night at dinner she was cold to him, almost formal; and her attitude made him uncomfortable and nervous. Once he attempted to take her in his arms and kiss her on the lips, in the hope of breaking down her aloofness. But she merely turned her cheek, and in a moment drew away from him without altering her reserve. He knew he was being chastened for his reprimand earlier in the day, and said nothing. He attempted to dismiss the matter indifferently, and began reading; but the woman sat down within his range of vision and looked out into the street abstractedly. There was no avoiding the influence of her mood, and West at length retired, baffled and uneasy.

He did not reproach her with her demonstrativeness after that night. He accepted her intrusions and facile kisses with equanimity, applying himself diligently to his labours. He was resolved to bear the weight of her detrimental influence without letting her become aware of the fact that she was affecting him. He could see no other course to pursue, and argued with himself that, after all, there were many compensations in her attentive adoration.

But she herself changed suddenly. Believing that he no longer responded to her soft persuasiveness, she took a further step and began to complain openly of his neglect. She would ask him to spend the day with her at Sèvres or Saint-Cloud, and then use his refusal as an excuse for an unpleasant scene in which she harried him with tears and accusations. On several occasions, when he went to the offices of the *Revue,* or attended concerts in the company of the men he had met through the *Revue's* editor, she told him irritably that, even during those first few hours in the evening which they might have alone, he chose to be with others. Once she had refused to go with him to an art exhibition because some friends were to accompany them. Her stinging remarks affected him so deeply that he was unable to enjoy himself. When, on his return, he apprised her of this fact, there was an expression of triumphant satisfaction in her eyes. West noticed it and said nothing. Her hold on him was so strong that his instinct was always toward pacific compromise. He was unaware, however, of the methods she was using to focus his attention on her alone. First, she had tried, by both sympathy and open revolt, to alienate him from his work. Then she had sought, through her tears and entreaties, to render him unfit for sustained thinking. At last, not attaining the success she desired, she had begun to tear away the other interests of his life—his fellowship with men, his hours of recreation, his excursions into the field of music and painting.

West weighed the situation carefully, but was unable to reach a conclusion. Any effort to appeal to her would merely have involved him more deeply, for his physical instincts were so intertwined with her nature that she was able to inflict on him a psychological punishment which would be worse than his present suffering. For his outside interests he did not particularly care. Those he would gladly have forgone if it would have assured

him a peaceful and congenial atmosphere in which to work. But to him the hopeless thing about the situation was that, when he devoted himself eagerly to his researches, she seemed to think he was grudging in his affection for her. To go to her with all of his ideas and writings would be to indulge in an elaborate and almost fantastic hypocrisy. He was too cognizant of the inadequacy of her intellectuality to cope with his ideals. In the beginning he had accepted her on the basis of masculine equality, overlooking the fundamental differences of the two sexes. He had now come to the conclusion that her penetration into his needs was intuitive rather than consciously analytic. Only after they had arrived in Paris had they indulged in any specific exchange of tastes. Then it was that he learned he had taken too much for granted. He discovered that she found æsthetic satisfaction in such artists as Massenet, Chopin, Tschaikowsky, Swinburne, Maeterlinck, D'Annunzio, Corot, Raphael and Botticelli. He noticed that she did not react enthusiastically to those men who formed the foundation of his cultural creed—Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart, Balzac, Goethe, Michelangelo, Veronese and Rubens. Between them was a lacuna which only deceit could have bridged. At first he had lived in a rare atmosphere of exquisite emotions, but, as the months went by, it became evident to him that his happiness was not altogether unrelated to that of a fool's paradise.

Nearly a year of his life with Evelyn Naesmith had passed, and, save during its first few months, he had accomplished little. He conceded point after point to her in the hope of reaching some emotional adjustment whereby his work might continue unhindered. But her consuming jealousy for everything in his life which did not touch her directly gave rise to a constant series of disagreeable episodes. There were heated exchanges of words, in which she sometimes accused him of failing to

respect her because of what she had done for him. At other times she openly accounted for his attitude by insisting that he was still in love with his wife.

These scenes recurred often. They produced in West a corrosive irritation which undermined him both physically and mentally. They annihilated his power to think, oppressed his heart, withered all impulses of action and energy. Even after they had passed, and the woman had wept and begged forgiveness, their influence persisted. When West would try to concentrate his mind again, to smooth out the twisted and corrugated surface of his thoughts, his ideas became intractable, and seemed to leap up and down, dodge, swirl, and spin round, like corks in a choppy sea. It would be days sometimes before his inward tranquillity would return to him, and these days were profitless, empty, lost. With awful yearnings he watched these sterile periods disappear into the bottomless abyss of his youth, where already lay buried the corpses of many of his finest years; and a caustic anger toward Evelyn Naesmith would fill him—an anger such as he might feel toward a thief who had robbed him of his most cherished possession.

XXXI

DURING the autumn of West's second year in Paris the greatest joy of his life came as a compensation for his many defeats and dissatisfactions:—his meeting and friendship with Paul Allard. At that time all France was talking of Allard. He was a young composer who had broken from tradition, and was trying to seek a new musical expression which would set forth the older ideas with greater emotional intensity. His unusual scales and chords, formed entirely upon harmonics, had at first been laughed at; and the manner in which he had put together notes which, according to the old musical formulas, should have been accomplished with elaborate transitions, had been denounced by the established critics. But so undeniably lovely had been the effect of these heresies that Allard's former detractors were now admitting the beauty of his new system. When his second opera had been produced, the new men rallied to his standard; and even in Germany he was given a serious hearing.

West had followed his work, and had admired the splendour of his compositions, as well as the freedom of intellectual energy which lay behind them. He saw in Allard a man who was striving, through the medium of sound, to express the same selective freedom of æsthetic beauty that he himself had once pleaded for in his writings. For nearly a year he had admired from a distance this revolutionary composer. He had discussed his works with other men, and had written of them in the books now under way. The miraculous art of Allard made a deep impression on West; and when the day came in which he was to meet the composer, he was in a state of rare and impatient anticipation.

It was the old editor of the *Revue* who had arranged the meeting. He wrote to West: "Often I have heard you speak of Paul Allard. Therefore, I take it for granted that you would like to see him. To-morrow night he and I shall be at the Closerie des Lilas, very near your home. Join us at nine, if you can. I have given Allard one of your early books, and he is desirous of meeting you." West wrote and thanked him, promising to be at the café at the appointed hour.

The next day he was in a gay mood. Never before had he realized how solitary he had been, how greatly in need of purely intellectual companionship. Alone, he had worked and thought amid men engaged in petty pursuits. Even Seminoff's appreciation had been entirely critical. But Allard was a creator as well as a thinker, and the thought of the approaching meeting banished that temperamental loneliness which had always hung over him, and which he had come to accept as the inevitable price he must pay for the joy of exalted labour.

West was not disappointed in the artist he had so long admired. Allard was a tall man, with a rugged, attractive face, heavily bearded. His forehead was massive. His eyes were restless and fiery, as if they were constantly registering the nervous activities of his brain. West expressed briefly his veneration of the other's works, and Allard, in turn, commented seriously on the book which the *Revue* editor had given him to read. After a moment's hesitancy, the conversation became swift and animated. It ran from music to painting, then to literature, always touching on the principles of the arts and their generating functions. The hours passed rapidly, and it was not till long past midnight that Allard arose.

"You must come to see me, Mr. West," he said, heartily. "Your ideas and perceptions astonish me. And I should enjoy seeing other of your books."

He wrote down his address and gave it to West.

"Can you come Friday evening? . . . I promise you we shall be alone."

West spent three days of hard work. A new incentive had entered into his efforts. He had come in contact with a man who appreciated him with deep and practical knowledge. The experience had shaken him out of his old hesitancy between the idea of futility and the impulse toward achievement. No longer was he alone in his battle. Allard had given him confidence and a greater sense of security. As he looked back upon the annoyances of Evelyn Naesmith, they appeared trivial. He wondered how he could have let them affect him so greatly. An elation, such as he had never before experienced, animated his ambitions.

Friday at dinner he had an unpleasant scene with Evelyn Naesmith.

"I thought that to-night, at least, we would be together," she said in a faultfinding voice. "Last night there were people here. To-morrow, we are invited to the opera. Sunday evening we are going out to dinner; and Monday you will want to attend the chamber music. Tuesday, no doubt, you will find some other excuse for not being alone with me. . . . You see, I am right when I say you are getting tired of my company."

When West did not reply, she ran on, scoldingly. But her words had little effect on him: he was too enraptured with the prospect of seeing Allard and of interchanging and discussing their ideas and beliefs. Even when Evelyn Naesmith, frowning gloomily, refused to let him kiss her as he went out, he was not troubled by her mood as he had been on previous occasions.

Allard lived far down on the Boulevard Saint Germain. As West drove slowly between the great rows of overhanging trees, he experienced a sensation of comfort and completion which had never been his during the years of his maturity. The night was warm with the first breath of summer. The street was alive with pedestrians,

little groups of laughing and chatting people. Girls in brilliant attire passed him, having about them the intractable romance of a dream. The cafés were filled, and now and then the strains of happy music came to him as he drove by. All those acts in his life which had heretofore troubled him now seemed justified. He caught sight of a woman whose figure recalled his wife, but there was no sorrow or regret in the memory of the woman he had deserted. When finally the *fiacre* drew up in front of a house at the mouth of a little *impasse,* he felt that he was about to attain to that stimulating and perfect joy toward which all the divagating paths of his past had inevitably led.

West paused before the great oaken door. Inside he could hear the sound of a piano. He listened attentively for a moment until the music ceased. Then he rang. There were footsteps within, and a woman opened the door and admitted him, smilingly. At the end of the wide hall behind her appeared Allard.

"Enter, my friend," he said, with pleasant sonorousness.

He came forward and put his arm about the woman, a small dark-haired, dark-eyed creature. West was introduced to her. She was Amélie Soën, Allard's mistress. After he and the composer were seated in the study, she brought them wine and cigarettes, excusing herself at once.

"I have thought of you many times," Allard said when they were alone. "I feel in you a curious understanding—an almost psychic participation in my work. You, I believe, are striving for the same goal that I am, only through a different medium—which makes us brothers, after a fashion. It is through such spirit as you and I possess that modern art must be renovated. . . . Perhaps it is not so difficult as we imagine. Already I am being acclaimed. I have passed that border-line which divides public obloquy from public esteem. Of course, it

is not intelligent esteem, but the fact at least indicates that subconsciously the world is experiencing a new beauty. That is the way the people receive all their gifts —unknowingly, like a sensitive negative. The impress is made upon them without their knowing it. In this day of epicene art, vitality like ours is all the more conspicuous. There are too many signs of asexuality, and therefore of decadence, in our modern art for us to be able to leave our mark upon life. Your work, like mine, is sustained by a passion which is on the move all the time, giving to our tasks an animating synthesis."

West listened, enraptured. When the other had finished, he himself began to talk. Their spirited conversation came easily, and each remark seemed to draw them closer together in the common bond of intellectual aristocracy. West had brought with him some of the material he had prepared during his first year in Paris, and read passages to Allard. Later Allard played passages from a new sonata he had recently been working on. The two men criticized each other with warmth, each feeling that he had at last found the one perfect listener, the man who was both disciple and master.

When the time came for West to depart, Allard insisted on walking with his guest along the river. They were frankly pleased at their mutual discovery, West perhaps more than Allard, for he had only just begun to find that path along which the composer had already blazed a trail. He gave himself up wholly to his enthusiastic admiration; and, before they parted, they had arranged to see each other often.

After that, their friendship developed rapidly. Scarcely a week went by that they did not come together at least two or three times, sometimes at Allard's house, sometimes at West's. There were excursions into the country, rides through the Bois, journeys down the river. An intimacy also grew up between Evelyn Naesmith and Amélie Soën. The two would meet during the day when

West and Allard were busy with their work. Amélie Soën was a woman of no meagre attainments. She was a capable musician, studying continually, and attending concerts whenever an opportunity offered. Evelyn Naesmith did not regard her in the same light in which she looked upon woman in general, but was glad of the other's company during the long hours in which West shut himself up in his study. Now he was working more swiftly and feverishly than ever, and in the evenings he was generally fatigued.

The months passed rapidly, and West was supremely happy. Autumn came, and he saw his book near completion. In the main it was the first of the series he had planned years before with Seminoff. He plunged into the labour of it with anxious energy. Allard and he had become the warmest of friends, and freely discussed their work with each other. The small world in which they lived had already remarked their intimacy. When one of them was seen at a café, the other was always expected to join him. They took their recreations together, for they had found in each other an understanding devoid of friction. Though it resulted in stimulation, it was temporarily soothing.

Before West's second winter in Paris had passed, Evelyn Naesmith began to show signs of resentment toward Allard's intrusion into the *ménage* which she and West had established. She had always had an instinctive dislike for the composer. She saw in him a danger which threatened her present relationship. It had been her hope to supply West's every need, and whenever he discussed his work with this man who had come into their lives, she regarded it as a usurpation of her prerogatives. She was too shrewd to object specifically at first. Her opinion, she knew, would not offset West's genuine affection for his friend; and she felt defeated by the very nature of the situation. Her jealousy of Allard, however, was so keen that once or twice she had openly shown her

displeasure at his intervention. In time her emotions became ungovernable. She forced many situations so that West, in planning his actions, was necessitated to make an apparent choice between her and Allard. If he decided in the man's favour, it resulted in an explosion of insulting invectives in which she declared that she was only a secondary consideration in his life, a mere convenience to be used or set aside in accordance with Allard's greater claim on him. Once she became hysterical and threatened to leave him, saying that he no longer respected her, that he had forced upon her a sense of immorality, that his constant preference for Allard's company was degrading her in her own eyes. So bitterly did she protest, that thereafter West felt guilty whenever he spent an hour with his friend. For a while he devoted himself to her more assiduously. But she was not content. Now she was more sullen than ever when he went from her.

One afternoon in early spring Allard had called for West. He was working at the time, but, at the sound of the man's voice, he came forth and greeted the visitor pleasantly. Together they went out. The passenger boats had just commenced to run again on the Seine, and they rode down the river, returning only at dusk. When West re-entered his apartment, he knew by Evelyn Naesmith's manner that he was to pay dearly for his afternoon's pleasure.

"*I* can never disturb you," the woman began hotly. "You are always too busy to have *me* intrude on your work. But when Paul Allard wants to see you—that's different! Suppose I had wanted you to go out with me this afternoon, would you have gone? . . . No! There would have been work which you would have preferred to do."

West sat down, without replying. The woman's words did not affect him as once they might have done. He felt that his friendship with Allard was too sacred and

fine a thing to be undermined by the demands of any woman. He was in an attitude of defence against any effort of hers to tear down the splendid structure of his affection for the man he had been with that afternoon.

"Do you think I can stand the shame that such knowledge gives me?" Evelyn Naesmith went on. "I have given you everything I had to give. I have sacrificed my self-respect and my good name. I have made myself a social outcast in order to help you in your work. And what thanks do I get for it? I am treated with the indifference which only a prostitute who had sold herself might expect. Do you think, if I were married to you, I would be treated this way? Never! You would respect me—you would show me some consideration. I wouldn't always be cast aside in favour of your friends." This last word she spoke with bitter sarcasm. "But I suppose it's all I have a right to expect—after what I have given you."

Still West did not reply. He had heard variations of these same remarks before, and he had learned that argument only prolonged the discussion and led nowhere.

The woman watched him angrily.

"You see," she remarked at length, "you have nothing to say for yourself. Your silence is an admission that what I say is true. . . . Well, I have borne the humiliation as long as I can. If you no longer respect me, I, at least, have my self-respect left. If Paul Allard means so much to you, I'm sure you have no further need for me. But if you want me, then you will have to give him up. I won't live with you any more if I am simply to be made use of and treated like a child."

More than once West had considered separating from Evelyn Naesmith. His reason told him that it was the best thing for him and his work; but when he projected his mind into the solitude which would follow her departure, he experienced a sense of suffering which was greater than he dared invite. He felt that he could not

face the future without her, for she had become too inextricably involved in his instincts and desires. She flooded his imagination, and he was jealous of her when she was away from him. Sometimes, when she was absent with Amélie Soën, he voluntarily let himself imagine that she was carrying on some intrigue behind his back. He went so far as to picture the details of this visionary liaison, and the mere thought of it suffocated him with sinister rage and jealousy.

It was in such moments that he realized how complete and basic was Evelyn Naesmith's hold upon him. But to-day, after those calm and cleanly hours with his friend in the brisk, vivid stretches of early spring landscape below Paris, he felt little of the woman's exotic appeal. Her threat to leave him created in him no fear of neurotic consequences. To the contrary, her words gave birth to a feeling of antagonism toward her, an antagonism which was heightened by the unreasonableness of her alternative that he give up his friendship with Allard.

He turned to her without emotion.

"It will do you no good to threaten me," he said calmly. "If you are determined to go, I shall not stop you. Nor shall I accede to your demand. It is not a case of Allard meaning more to me than you. The relationship is different. My joy in being with him is purely a mental one—it is impersonal, if you like. It in no way intrudes upon my inherent love for you. But if you care for me so little that you would deny me this friendship, and would actually leave me if I did not give it up—then I would not want you to stay. . . . That's my answer. Now you can do whatever your instincts dictate."

The catastrophe which his harsh words seemed to forebode frightened him a little, despite his resolution, and he added in a softer voice: "But I want you to know this: I love you, and it would hurt me deeply if you went away."

Evelyn Naesmith did not go. The next morning she came to West in a state of humble contrition.

"Oh, dear heart," she cried, "don't you know how much I love you? It would kill me if I had to live without you. I couldn't go away from you—don't you know that, dear? I don't know why I threatened it yesterday—but I was so unhappy, so distracted and utterly miserable, I didn't know what I was saying. I only knew that I wanted you—that I had to have you at any cost. . . . Oh, forgive me, my own—forgive me for what I said! I didn't mean it—it was the agony of my love that spoke."

West took her in his arms tenderly and happily. Several times during the night he had wakened in fright at the thought of his insecure future without her.

XXXII

During the months following, a change seemed to come over her. She was attentive, even submissive, and combated none of his decisions. The subject of Allard rarely came up between them. There was never any faultfinding because she was left alone; and West felt that at last his life had settled into a routine of perpetual tranquillity. Nevertheless, he was conscious of some brooding catastrophe. His very happiness seemed to carry in it a portent of disaster. He could not trace this apprehension to its cause, and, since it was so slight, he dismissed it as a normal psychological reaction against his perfect felicity.

One day, however, when he informed Evelyn Naesmith that they were to dine with Allard that evening, she did not reply at once, but seemed to be considering the advisability of her acceptance of the invitation.

"Do you particularly want me to go?" she asked, after a pause.

"Of course, I do," West told her, perplexed at her reluctance. "Amélie will be there and will expect you."

"Very well, dear," the woman agreed, as if her duty had decided her against her inclination.

"Why do you accept in that spirit?" West asked her. "Don't you like Amélie? Has anything happened between you and her?"

"No," she admitted, unwillingly. "It's not Amélie. . . . Only, I'd rather not go—unless you want me to very much. . . . Don't ask me to give a reason. It may be only foolish imagination on my part—and I don't want to say anything about it until I am sure."

The man regarded her curiously. Obviously, something serious was troubling her. For a moment his mind considered Allard as the source of the difficulty. But he could not understand in what way Allard could be responsible for this disinclination on her part. Her actions and attitude during the past week had led him to believe she had outgrown her antagonistic jealousy of the composer. Yet he felt sure that she desired to remain away from the dinner on Allard's account. He was deeply puzzled, but did not question her. Nor did he ask her to explain. He went alone; and the affair was not spoken of again.

During the following week West noticed that Evelyn Naesmith's manner had undergone a change. She had become almost formal with Allard. She addressed few remarks to him. She was polite and courteous, and she bore herself toward him as if he had been a new acquaintance. Still West did not demand an explanation. There was really nothing tangible on which he could have based a complaint. He saw, though, that Allard was aware of the alteration in Evelyn Naesmith's manner. As a result, the man became attentive and considerate to a marked degree, as if he were trying to overcome her rigid attitude.

West looked on without remonstrance, but finally, when she again asked to be excused from an excursion which he and Allard had planned, he insisted that she give an explanation. As before, she attempted to evade the question, begging him to accept her decision without inquiry. But he had reached the point where he worried greatly over the situation, and he would not let the matter drop.

"It is something I ought to know," he said. "You have changed greatly toward Paul. You avoid him whenever you can. When he is here you assume a manner of reserve, almost of conventionality. You decline to go with me to his house; and now you do not wish to spend the day with us at Saint-Cloud. . . . I want to know

what the trouble is, and I think you owe me an explanation. Paul is overgenerous to you. He treats you with the utmost consideration and kindness——"

"That's just it!" The woman met his eyes squarely.

It took West a few seconds to receive the full significance of her words. But even then he would not accept the suspicion as final.

"What do you mean?" he asked sharply, rising and facing her.

"Oh, Stanford, don't make me tell you," she pleaded. "Don't you see it will only make trouble? Aren't things better as they are? I don't want to make you unhappy. I don't want to be the cause of any cloud coming into your friendship with Paul. . . . Please, please don't insist upon my saying any more."

A hot flush of abnormal jealousy nearly blinded the man. The emotions he had suffered when he speculated on Evelyn Naesmith's possible faithlessness swept over him now, not as mere figments, but as painful realities. He compressed his lips and narrowed his eyes. His hands worked nervously.

"Tell me the whole story," he commanded huskily. "Don't attempt to avoid anything. Before either of us ever leaves this room again, I'll know all there is to know."

The woman drew away from him in fright.

"I—I'll tell you, Stanford," she stammered excitedly. "But it isn't anything—really it isn't! It isn't serious. . . . Don't look at me that way!"

"Go on!" said the man.

"I think—I think that Paul is beginning to love me," she explained in a low voice. "I don't know—but certain things he has said—things he has done—make me think so. One day in the Bois at Saint-Cloud, when you and Amélie were far ahead, he put his arm round me to help me up one of the paths. . . . There was something in the way he did it—the way he held me—that made me

suspect. . . . When I drew away, he looked at me sadly and reprovingly, and said, 'Don't you like me?' . . . The next day when he was here he whispered—when you were not noticing—that I was very beautiful, that you didn't know how—lucky you were. . . . Then he looked at me in the eyes longingly, and asked: 'Don't you know why I come here so often?' There was no mistaking his meaning then. . . . After that, whenever we were alone, or he had the opportunity, he said just such things to me. . . . He told me he always thought of me when he wrote his music. . . . And the last time we were there for dinner—you remember: Amélie was playing the piano, and you were following the score—he put his hand on mine—and—I felt a shudder run through his body——"

She was sobbing now, and covered her face with her hands as if to hide her shame and humiliation.

West said nothing for a long time. His face was white, and a flame of black anger distorted the objects before him. He walked up and down the room a few times, his hands clenched tightly. Then he came to an abrupt halt.

"I can't believe it," he announced. For the past few moments his instincts had dominated him. Now his reason had taken the upper hand.

Evelyn Naesmith looked up angrily.

"I didn't expect you to believe it!" she flashed at him. "That's the reason I didn't want to tell you. He's your friend, while I'm only your—mistress. It would make no difference anyway, I suppose. Of what importance am I, after all?"

Her words stung him to anger. But he was not wholly sure of Allard's loyalty. After all, was it not possible that she had spoken the truth? When he considered that question, he found that his pain was due, in large part, to his possible loss of faith in his friend.

"I shall find out for myself," he announced, after a moment's troubled thought. "I shall watch him closely,

and I shall learn the truth. . . . Now, get ready and come with me to the dinner. And I want you to act as if nothing had happened. . . . Do you understand?"

Thereafter West was on his guard. Whenever Allard sat near Evelyn Naesmith or addressed a remark to her, he watched them, listening for some sign which would verify the woman's report. At the end of a week he believed that he had noted a blameworthy undercurrent in the other man's actions. He tried to argue with himself that there was nothing unusual in them; but the poison of suspicion was eating away at his mind, and the activity of this poison was increased by significant glances from the woman whenever Allard indulged in an informal pleasantry or paid her a conventional compliment. Once when they were disembarking from the boat at Neuilly, Allard took the woman's hand to assist her, showing her a preferential consideration over Amélie Soën. A hot rush of blood inflamed West's cheeks, but he restrained himself, and endeavoured to argue away Allard's acts on the grounds of courtesy.

But, after that, he could not bring himself to feel the same toward his friend. Gradually resentment crept into his attitude. A gnawing doubt was at work in his brain —a doubt which grew more persistent as the days went by. Allard had done nothing which, under ordinary circumstances, West could have set down definitely as having overstepped the boundary of propriety. But, despite himself, he read hidden meanings into words and actions which on the surface had the appearance of innocence. He began to lose his affection for Allard, for he could not keep back the constantly recurring notion of the other's hypocrisy. The spontaneity went out of their relationship. Their conversations lost savour; and when Allard called at the studio, West wondered as to the real object of his visits. A subtle and insiduous corruption had taken place in West's mind, until nearly all the pleas-

ure had disappeared from those hours which he and Allard spent together.

One afternoon, when Evelyn Naesmith left the house to make some purchases he was assailed by a quick and terrible suspicion that she had gone to meet Allard. His mental torture made work impossible, and, as he looked down at his hands, he saw they were trembling. Within fifteen minutes his suspicion had turned to a belief, and, in a state of almost murderous anguish, he hurried out of the house and went direct to the other's studio.

Amélie Soën admitted him, and led him in to the composer, who was busily transcribing a score. At the sight of him, West experienced a physical weakness. He sank into a chair, like one overcome with exhaustion.

"What's the matter, my friend?" Allard accosted him solicitously. "You look like a man who had seen a ghost."

West smiled weakly.

"Too much work, I imagine," he managed to say. "I feel played out. . . . I thought I would run over to see you—to use you as a kind of tonic."

He stayed for an hour, and then returned to his apartment.

The discovery of his error, however, did not dissipate his doubts. His emotions had been too indelibly registered for any mere circumstantial evidence to blot them out. He had grown morbid letting his mind dwell on the idea of Allard's infidelity, and during the next few days his sufferings increased. Such a state of affairs, he knew, could not go on. His strength was being undermined. He wanted to go to Allard and accuse him openly, but there was nothing specific on which he might ground his accusations. He was fighting in the dark with an invisible enemy. He thought of going away—to Florence, perhaps—and of taking the woman with him. But what could he say to Allard? They had become too close, and had sworn mutually to remain always with each other.

There was no reason why Allard should stay in Paris. He had often said that even should West return to London, he would go there, too.

In the midst of West's speculations, the climax came. One afternoon he crossed the river to view an exhibition of paintings. He had called for Allard, but was told the composer was not in. He gave no thought to the fact, but left a request for the other to join him at the galleries, if possible. Allard did not appear, and it was nearly dusk when West returned home. As he entered his studio, he heard voices coming from the little *salon* back of the spiral stairs. As he drew nearer, he recognized Allard's quick and impulsive tones. For a moment his mind went blank from the shock of his jealousy. An unaccountable horror seized him. A primal hatred welled up in him for the man in the next room. When he recovered himself sufficiently to control his movements, he walked to the door and threw it open.

Allard rose from his chair beside the woman.

"Well! Here you are!" he said pleasantly. "Evelyn said you would be here any minute and asked me to wait——"

The room was in twilight, and at first Allard could not see West's features distinctly. But while he was speaking, he became aware of the other's glaring eyes and tense, white face. Then he had broken off his words abruptly.

West turned to the woman.

"Did you tell him I was coming immediately? And did you ask him to wait for me?"

Evelyn Naesmith bit her lips, as if she did not want to answer, and looked down at the floor.

West stepped to one side, and pointed to the open door.

"Now, Allard," he said, fiercely, "you go! And don't ever come here again."

Allard hesitated, looking first at the woman and then at the enraged man.

"Don't wait!" West ordered sharply, his nostrils dilating with frenzied passion. "Do you think you can deceive me? Do you think I'm ignorant of what's been going on? I'm not the fool you've believed me! You come into my house under the guise of friendship and take advantage of my trust in you. At first, I wouldn't believe it; but now I have the evidence of my own eyes."

Allard drew himself up and glared sharply at the woman, who sat with bowed head, her hands clasped tightly over the arms of the chair. A cynical smile swept over his face.

West approached him menacingly.

"Leave here before I kill you!" he said.

Allard moved toward the door, looking pityingly at the man he loved.

"You poor, deluded fool!" he remarked.

West listened to the other's footsteps till they had died away. A feeling of unbearable emptiness and loss consumed him. Suddenly the anger in his heart failed him. So this was the end! His friendship with Allard was over. And what a friendship it had been! How unexpected, how magical! Now he had renounced that friendship, renounced those days of confidence and eager perceptions, of understanding and intellectual calm. Again he must face the future alone. But in his heart there would always rest an unforgettable memory; and that memory, he knew, would be his deepest consolation. No matter what other human relationships the coming years held in store for him, his broken friendship with Allard would ever remain the profoundest and dearest experience of his life. Sorrow replaced his anger, and he stood in the doorway, looking out into the gathering gloom of night, broken and desolate.

The woman's hand upon his arm awakened him. He turned to her with bitter enmity, and regarded her a moment. He felt no emotion toward her, save one of re-

sentment. He threw her from him roughly, for he realized that to her was attributable his consuming sorrow.

"Don't touch me!" he said brusquely. "I want to be alone."

XXXIII

Again West sought solace in his work. During the remainder of the year his personal appearance altered greatly. Up to now the indefatigable years had touched him lightly, leaving little trace of their passing. He had remained young, because his heart had been full of the emotions of youth—hope, aspiration, desire. But, of a sudden, time's finger seemed to snatch the mask of resilient strength from his features. The lines in his forehead and about his mouth visibly deepened. The muscles of his cheeks drooped, the fulness of his lips shrank. The first signs of greyness showed in his hair which had taken on a look of sparseness. His hands seemed to have lost their flexibility and to have grown thinner. When he sat huddled in his chair, his legs crossed, there was an aspect of limpness about him. Also his mind had been overcast with sombreness. The sensation of isolation affected him physically, almost like a disease. No one guessed the true cause of the intensity of his distress save Evelyn Naesmith. She applied herself to his needs with touching solicitude. She alone knew how profound was his solitude; and her actions at times had about them an air of repentance.

West had grown silent. He associated with other men but little; and, when he was alone with Evelyn Naesmith, he withdrew into himself so completely that, even when she spoke to him, he did not heed her. He went about his work and ate his meals as if unconscious of her presence. He appeared always to be brooding over some great wrong that had been done him, and often he flared up angrily when his silent meditations were interrupted.

"You have brought me enough sorrow," he would say to the woman. "Don't annoy me further."

For weeks she watched him patiently, waiting for his suffering to pass. But when he showed no signs of regaining his normality, she herself became indifferent and sullen.

"How long do you think I can bear this sort of thing?" she would ask him petulantly.

He merely shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know," he would answer. "And I care less."

Ever since the day that he had ordered Allard out of the house, he had harboured a blind resentment toward Evelyn Naesmith. His affection for her had decreased steadily until, by the end of the year, her influence over him had died away. Then it was that hatred had entered his heart. The sight of her infuriated him, for he felt that somehow she had been guilty of wanton treachery. He sat for hours in his studio with his papers before him, his pen in hand; but he could make no progress; his mind refused to grasp the problems of his task.

Six months after his friendship with Allard had been severed, he rose from his work one morning, and went to the woman.

"I am through," he told her harshly. "The end has come. Either you're going away, or I am. Make your own choice. So long as you are in the same house with me I am incapacitated for work."

There followed a heated and enervating scene in which she gave vent to all the pent-up fury of her nature. She hurled threats and invectives at him, and ridiculed him for his weakness. But her words did not affect him. To the contrary, he felt a certain pleasurable relief in her wrath. His indifference whipped her into uncontrollable anger. She confessed her deception in regard to Allard, and laughed derisively at her triumph.

West heard this admission of his friend's innocence without astonishment. He had secretly felt it all the

time, but had not admitted it to himself. He knew now that this subconscious knowledge had been the matrix in which was born his hatred of the woman before him. As he watched her, he had an instinct to strangle her, to inflict physical punishment upon her. But the instinct was wholly psychological. His body did not respond. There was no energy back of his impulse, and he remained passive, contemplating her with a sort of indulgent contempt.

That afternoon she passed out of West's life. She had told him she was going at once, and he had left the house, so that he would not have to see her again. The apartment was dark when he re-entered it that night. He switched on the lights and looked about him. The floors were strewn with pieces of wrapping paper, broken pasteboard boxes, discarded garments, odds and ends which had been thrown away. The closet doors were open, revealing empty shelves and vacant hooks. West passed from one room to another. Everywhere the same desolate signs of hasty decision met his eye. He went into his studio and sat down before the empty fireplace. This dreary climax of his three years with Evelyn Naesmith left him singularly unmoved. A feeling of peace and freedom buoyed up his spirits. It was nearly dawn when he rose and started to retire.

The next day he moved to smaller quarters. His money, which had been dwindling rapidly since he came to Paris, was nearly exhausted. He had given little thought to his financial condition, for Evelyn Naesmith had always insisted on making possible, with her money, the continuance of his labours. Now he was confronted with poverty. But he figured that he had enough so that, if he practised strict economy, he could finish two of his books. He hoped they might bring him an income sufficient for his actual needs, and so went about completing them with a feverish impulse born of necessity. He had moved to a little studio on the Avenue du Maine in an

inexpensive quarter; but, despite the sordidness of his surroundings, he experienced a feeling of personal contentment which had never been his during his years with Evelyn Naesmith.

He looked at the facts of his life squarely, and analysed them with a clinical disregard for his emotions. He arrived at the conclusion that it had been his idealistic regard for women which had always held him a slave. In each woman who had intimately touched his life he had been deceived. He had overvalued her, imputing to her qualities she did not own. Even in the case of Evelyn Naesmith, as unusual as she was, he had been blinded to her inadequacy to inspire him. Was she, after all, so different from the women of lust and barter? He recalled Seminoff's early warning and believed that, at last, through bitter experience, he had come to a knowledge of the truth. The tyranny of women—had not that been his curse? But there could be no tyranny without the cowardice of the tyrannized. Yes, he had been cowardly. He had not been dominated except to what extent he had permitted himself to be dominated. The fault lay in him—he did not attempt to deceive himself on that point. The women who had hindered him had merely been repressive obstacles which, had he possessed the power, he might have conquered. His appetites, his emotions, his sentiments, perhaps even the biological imperative of his nature—these had constituted the factors of his weakness. But he was done with women now. Henceforth he would avoid them as the unconscious enemies of all that was noblest in him. At last he had shaken himself free. He would never go back to his old mistakes. He felt a certain exhilaration in his resolution —an exhilaration which neither the poverty nor the hardship of his present sordid existence could dampen.

He turned to his books with the vigour of a death agony. He found himself suddenly in possession of a plenitude of speech. The words came with their old

vivacity and rapture. He seemed to be drunk with the very essence of creation. He was addressing himself to the deepest problems of life, in a novel manner, from a new angle, and also with a greater dynamic intensity of feeling. He was startled by his own facility, by the ease and freedom with which his mind worked. At last he could see himself soaring upward through the years, free of all restraints, the master of his mind and spirit. But he knew the need for haste. He had planned a gigantic ethic of culture running to ten volumes, which would cover every branch of human aspiration; and many of his finest creative years lay behind him, sterile and lost.

In the spring the first book was completed, and he sent it to his London publishers. They hesitated and remonstrated, disappointed at the nature of the work. But in the end they agreed to publish it, fearing that they might lose West, and hoping that his next manuscript would be a novel along his former lines. The reviewers, for the most part, ignored the work, though a few criticized it savagely. But there were those men all over Europe who, having passed beyond the academic standard, welcomed the book with intelligent praise.

Seminoff wrote him briefly: "I thank God you have reclaimed yourself. Some day people will recognize, just as I did in years gone by, the courageous precision with which you turn the white light of your intellect upon the fallacies of our civilization. You have become strong again."

Even Paul Allard wrote him from Leipzig: "You have repudiated my friendship, but you cannot repudiate my admiration. By your distrust and doubt you have forever made impossible all personal relationship between us—you have destroyed it by your violence. Therefore, it is not as a friend that I write you, but as one who must go on admiring you for the things you have done and are doing. On all other subjects I must keep silent. I sent for your book the moment I heard of it. It has

about it the splendour of isolated striving, and the courage of exalted conviction. Perhaps you knew what I would think of it. But I could not refrain from telling you how much it means in my life, what strength it gives me. Our paths lead to the same goal, although you have chosen to separate them by a gulf over which neither of us can ever pass again. I beg of you not to answer this. I make that request in spite of my belief that, since we parted, you have learned the truth. Amélie has heard from Evelyn, and I am aware of the way your affair ended. I have always understood your final action toward me."

West did not answer Allard's letter. He, too, knew how futile would be any attempt to remodel their friendship on the ruins which now lay before them. But the letter lent him courage, and in the desperate solitude of his new peace he turned to the task of finishing the second book in the series he had planned.

A passionate courage, born of a serene and untrammeled mind, coloured and tinctured all the processes of his intellect. The idea that he could never progress without women had, in his early youth, taken lodgment in his mind, and it had always fashioned his actions. But at last he knew that that idea had been the outgrowth of an instinct whose effects he feared. The moment the instinct had been conquered, the idea departed. Even now, however, he was conscious of a loss, and there were times when his detachment caused him suffering. But his pain was largely physical. It did not impair the free exercise of his brain, as he had always imagined it would. Though he had periods of depression in which he longed for the mothering tenderness of a woman's love, he was still able to continue his labours without signs of deterioration. The attraction of women still held him, and in the evenings he would often walk to the Café du Dôme, or to the Café de la Rotonde, and sit with the models of

the quarter, laughing and chatting gaily on trivial subjects.

These girls, who made no pretension to learning, and who accepted the effervescences of life as the profoundest realities, gave West what relaxation he craved. On returning to his studio at night, he often wondered if, in this utterly inconsequential and impersonal relationship with the feminine, did not lie the secret of a man's sexual unity. Was not levity, after all, the only possible common ground between man and woman? For him, at least, he was satisfied that such was the case. Women were merely a recreation, a plaything to be taken up when the mood dictated, and put aside with the same impersonal abandonment that one would put aside a toy. His own rôle was that of the fighter; and just as the warrior must go into battle alone, so must he conquer, single-handed, the years ahead.

But West had failed to count on the tenacity of his past, on the persistency of the waves he had set in motion during the years of his delusion. He had thought that he had succeeded in swimming out into serene waters untroubled by the currents of his youth. But the influences had not died out. They had even gathered momentum since he had set them in motion. They, too, like the activities of physical energy, had gone on and on with perpetual reiteration, until at last they broke about him and carried him down.

XXXIV

One day in early summer, a few months after his book had appeared, a letter from his wife was forwarded him. He had not heard from her for over three years. During that time his memory of her had lost much of its reality. But, when he saw her handwriting, he felt as if some unpleasant haunting dream had come true. It affected him like a mystery. He might have felt the same had someone he knew to be dead suddenly appeared before him. In that moment he realized that he had not eradicated Alice West's influence: he had merely drawn before it a curtain of indifference. The arrival of her letter drew the curtain aside and revealed once more his life in London. But when he had read the letter and found that it did not touch upon their former relationship, he was unable to dispel his first impression. He re-read it several times in the hope of recovering himself; but each reading added confusion to his emotions. It told him that his mother was ill and was not expected to live long; and it asked him to come at once, as his presence might help her, inasmuch as her breakdown had, in a way, resulted from the shock his book had caused her.

"I have never told her the truth, Stanford," the letter ended, "and I have tried to disguise my own suffering. I have said that you are busy in France gathering material for new novels. You see, I've hoped against hope that some day you might grow weary of your present life, and that your mother might never have to bear the burden of the true facts. But after the first year, I think, she began to suspect that I was keeping something from her. She never questioned me about you. But I could

see by numerous indications that she guessed the truth. Several times I have caught her in tears. She has been unusually tender to me, and her love for our daughter has been one of the most wonderful things I have ever seen. She has borne up well, although during the last year there has been a hopelessness in her eyes and in her voice which has frightened me. She seems to have grown very old, and of late she has rarely smiled. I tried to keep your book away from her. Somehow, I personally couldn't help getting it and reading it. And one day she found it, and her silent suffering afterward became appalling. It haunted me day and night. Her energy and resistance were torn down, and last week, all of a sudden, her vitality gave way, and we had to put her to bed. The doctors hoped she would rally, but she has grown steadily weaker, and it was suggested that I send for you at once. I have a feeling that if she sees you it will make a difference to her. Therefore, I beg of you to come—not for my sake—but for hers."

West's grief was poignant, but he could not dissociate his sorrow for his mother from the sorrow he felt for his wife. These two women had loved him greatly, and that love seemed to weld them together in his mind. In Alice West he saw a restatement of all the hopes and longings which had formed the basis of his mother's love.

He returned at once to America, telling himself that in another month he would be back again at work. But when he looked round his little studio with its cheap furniture and its rows of books, he had a foreboding he would never see it again. All the logic of life pointed to the fact that he would come back to his work, but that logic was insufficient to do away with the presentiment that this was the end. An irrational impulse made him gather all his papers together and pack them carefully in a chest, although he would not admit to himself that a sense of catastrophe had prompted him to this act.

"It will be safer to put all my things in a chest while I

am away," he said aloud. "The *concierge* might come in and disturb them. A storm might break the skylight and destroy them."

Ten days later he was in Saratoga. But he was too late: his mother had died several days before. The news filled West with a sense of culpability. His conscience tortured him with the accusation that he had had a hand in his mother's death, and his pity and remorse included his wife as well.

Alice West had changed much in the last three years. The tendency toward wistfulness, which had always characterized her, had grown into a constant expression of sorrow. Her step had lost its elasticity, and much of the grace had departed from her figure. All the air of youth had died out of her actions. Her voice had grown monotonous, and she hesitated sometimes between words with the indecision of approaching age. Her eyes had altered the most. They were the eyes of a sick woman, lack-lustre, and filled with vagueness, as if they were looking inward and saw only the things of the heart.

All these effects of suffering West noticed, and they filled him with ineffable pity. Was he not to blame for these signs of his wife's grief? Could he escape the guilt of the havoc he had wrought? He wondered how he could ever have felt resentment toward this broken woman. An overwhelming tenderness took possession of him, for he was face to face with an irreparable tragedy of his own making—a tragedy more terrible than anything he had before experienced. And this woman whom he had ruined and brought to desolation had no word of blame for him, only the silent humility of an ultimate love. She might have punished him for the great wrong he had done her, but her grief was too great to be assuaged by vengeance. She had accepted, without complaint, the punishment of his own disloyal acts. She was tender toward him with a sweetness and fidelity which were deeper and more moving than forgiveness.

She did not inquire once of his work or his plans, but chose to ignore the years that he had been away from her.

At the sight of his child, West experienced a deep and unfamiliar emotion. He would hardly have recognized her, so large had she grown. She was like another creature. Curls hung down her back. The plumpness had left her face, and had been supplanted by the delicate lines of beauty. She was nearly nine years old, fluent of speech, discerning, restless with a perpetual interest in life's objectivity. How tiny she had been when he had last seen her! How detached, too, with the unquestioning indifference of her five years! A miracle seemed to have been wrought. Now she was moved by personalities, almost like a matured person. She climbed into West's lap and put her arms about his neck, kissing him with the ardour of childish loneliness. It had been her first direct appeal to his nature, the first subtle demand for his care and protection. He did not know that Alice West had brought her up to love him, and had talked always of her father, had shown her his picture, had implanted in her the idea that he, and no other man, was the one character round whom her little imperfect world should centre. She, imaginative, had built a dream about him, and had worshipped at the altar of her make-believe. When, at last, he had appeared to her in person, as someone she could touch and take hold of, she brought him all the accumulated love of her lonely visioning. He was not a stranger to her; he had been her constant companion ever since she was able to understand her mother's words.

West saw in her something of his own youth, and he saw in her, too, the old innocent appeal of Alice West herself when the morning sunshine had filtered through the church windows and fallen upon her neck and hair. The child represented to him the eternal march of life's events, the new order rising out of the old. She symbolized that paradox of the world which grants and denies consummation, which ever approaches, yet never arrives,

which is the eternal approximation of all human endeavour—the law of generation. He himself had striven and hoped, had struggled forward into the eternity of the future, and, in the end, he had become only the fructifying field from which a new energy would take life and go forward into the years he could never see. While in the circle of his child's yielding arms, life seemed to West like a huge engine into whose furnace all humanity must be burned, in order that the machine might re-create another humanity which, in turn, must be fed to the furnace for the production of still another humanity. How could he, alone, hope to fight against this cosmic process? Was he not but a part of that great law of destruction and re-creation?

These speculations were momentary, but in some cryptic way they seemed to explain the underlying causes of his emotions. The child had aroused in him the full force of his paternal instinct, and his wife had revived in his heart a pity which was greater than all desire for achievement.

The following afternoon he went to Alice West and asked her what her plans were for herself and the child.

She looked at him a long time before answering.

"There is no need of burdening you with our affairs if—if you have decided—to go back."

"Let us drop all that," he said gently. "I want to know what's in your heart and mind—I want to know everything. It is no time now for evasion. The truth must be faced."

A ray of hope shone in her listless eyes.

"I thought, perhaps—that is, I prayed that you would stay—that you had grown weary of the life you had chosen." She could not keep back her tears, but she went on, paying no heed to them: "The money is gone. The London property brought much less than you thought it would, and I don't know where to turn. Of course, there is the meagre charity of relatives—a home, perhaps, for

a few years. But after that—I try not to think of it. . . . If it were only myself, I wouldn't care. It would make no difference. My life is over, but the baby must be cared for. She must have a chance. And it was for her sake that I hoped you might—you might—Oh, Stanford, don't you see what I mean? That poor little baby—it is she who, in the end, must bear all the burdens. It is *her* future that will be sacrificed. . . . It is a terrible thing for a child to grow up handicapped, without a father, without any advantages, always confronted by the necessity of making her own living. . . . Sometimes I wonder if it wouldn't be best if God should take her back to Him again before she is old enough to know. . . . My own life doesn't matter—don't you see? I would willingly, joyfully, give up my life to-day if I knew—if I were sure—that she would not have to suffer, that she would have a chance—a chance that is her right."

West felt the world of his early hopes gradually sliding out from under him. Now he was confronted by the last irresistible appeal—the appeal to a greater chivalry.

"She shall have a chance," he said softly, like one who has been hypnotized, and is being led into admissions against his will.

The woman took courage at his words.

"Don't you see," she went on brokenly, "that if she were a boy it would be different? The question of a livelihood could then be solved. She could make her own way. . . . But she is a girl, and she needs protection—she needs help. And she is so gentle, so sensitive, so keen to all influences. . . . Don't think of me, Stanford. I would never ask anything for myself. But I do want you to think of her. . . . Isn't it your duty to do something for her? She is of an age now where a home would mean everything to her. You don't know how she loves you—I have taught her to. I have kept the ideal of you always foremost in her little mind. During the last year scarcely a day has gone by that she has not spoken of

you lovingly and asked when you would come back to her. . . . That is why I have never divorced you. That is why I have lied to everyone—pretending that you were away working. No one here knows the truth. . . . It was for baby's sake that I did it. . . . And I always thought that, perhaps—perhaps things might change—that you might grow tired and hear the call of her little helpless life."

"You have kept it all a secret?" asked West. "No one knows?"

"I couldn't bring myself to tell them," she answered. "Don't you see what it would have meant to the baby—disgrace, gossip, the gibes of her playmates. . . . She would never have outgrown it. She would have carried that sorrow to her grave. . . . Wasn't it the best thing to do, Stanford, especially as I believed—deep down in my heart—that some day you would remember her—your obligations to her?"

West rose and went to the window, where he stood looking out into the dense green of the summer.

"Of course, you are right," he agreed in a weary voice. The cords were tightening about his heart. His ambition seemed suddenly to have spent itself. He had fought and suffered for years; he had gained ground; and then, just as he had come within striking distance of his goal, there had unexpectedly loomed up in his way an insurmountable and impenetrable wall. He had, as he thought, freed himself from the influence of women, but he had forgotten his daughter, the strongest influence of them all. His strength had gone; his courage had failed. After the efforts of a lifetime he had arrived at a brilliant and desperate chaos. There was no resistance left in him. After a moment he turned to his wife.

"Yes, you did right," he said. "I had the strength to combat my mother—to combat even you. I have sacrificed those I loved on the altar of my ambition. But

this final test is too great. I see now that I could never sacrifice my daughter also. . . . I shall stay."

Alice West rose slowly and came to him with benumbed steps.

"Stanford!" she exclaimed, and wept hysterically.

He took hold of her gently and led her back to her chair. In anguish he watched her a moment. When he saw how tremendous was the effect of his decision, he could not resist consoling her further.

"I always intended—to ask you some day if I might not come back," he said. "Not only for the baby's sake, but for my own, as well. I have always wanted you—I have always suffered for what I did to you. When I left Paris, I packed my things in the hope that you would forgive me. You see, I had grown weary of the life I was leading. . . . But I have nothing to offer you now—only the wreck of what I was once. But I will atone—I will make amends."

The woman took his hand in hers.

"I knew you would come back," she sobbed. "And that knowledge is all that has kept me alive. I knew that some day you would see the error—the terrible error—of your vain fight against all that is good and beautiful in life. . . . But we can begin again, can't we, Stanford? My love is greater than anything in the world. It can overlook anything, because it is a love that understands. And I do understand the things you have done. I know how you have suffered, how you have paid the price for your weakness—as everyone must. . . . I prayed that you would not suffer too much, for I wanted you to be happy. . . . Let us start anew, dear. Let us try to find what peace we can during the remaining years of our life. Oh, let us grow old together in the serenity of our faith and love for each other. Let us try to forget the nightmare of the past few years. We will blot it from our lives. We must do these things—if only for the baby's sake. . . . My husband! My little boy!"

The next morning West was out on the lawn playing with his daughter. He heard approaching footsteps behind him and looked round. Caleb Matthews was coming toward him. The man looked little older than he had when West had known him as a boy. He walked briskly, almost jauntily. Only his hair seemed to have recorded the passing of time: now it was snow-white and thin.

"Stanford, my boy!" he exclaimed, holding out his hand. "After all these years!"

He regarded the other a moment, adjusting his glasses with extreme deliberation and care.

"Yes," he commented, "I can see your father in you."

For many years West had completely forgotten the existence of this old friend of his father's; but, at the sight of him, his early memories rushed back. After all, it was not so long ago that he had gone from Greenwood. And yet, he thought, Caleb Matthews must be well along in his sixties. He himself had passed forty.

"Ah, and here's the little lady!" the newcomer exclaimed in a tone of patronizing paternalism. He looked up at West. "Miss West and I have met before. . . ." His manner became serious. "And now, I want to talk to you."

The child came close to her father and clung to his arm.

"Stanford," began the older man, "your wife has told me something of your—what shall I say?—financial difficulties. . . . No, not that exactly; but she gave me to understand some time ago when your work in Europe was completed, you might come back to Greenwood. . . . It occurred to me from something she said that you would accept a post at the College. You remember your father always wanted you to go on with his work. I told your wife that I would try to get you to join our staff. I am the Director now, have been ever since your father's death. . . . Let me see—it's been over a year since I had this talk with your wife; and when you didn't come back, I took it for granted you were too absorbed in your

work. I was disappointed, for the College needs men like you, men of broad learning and achievement. . . . Yesterday, your wife sent me word, saying you were here; so I thought I'd come over to welcome you and see if you would consider the appointment—professor of English. The formalities can be arranged easily."

West's hand rested on his daughter's head. He hesitated but a moment.

"I should be most happy to accept. We are moving to Greenwood in a few days. We'll re-open the old house. . . . Yes, I think a post at the College would be just what I want."

XXXV

THREE days later Stanford and Alice West and their child entered the old Greenwood home on River street. For nearly ten years it had been sealed up, and no one had ever set foot in it. Workmen had torn down the boards from the windows and doors, and the dust had been removed and the windows cleaned, according to West's instructions sent from Saratoga. When he arrived, the house was ready for occupation. The furniture stood as he had last seen it. The books in the library were on the shelves as in the old days. Nothing had changed. The home had remained as Joseph West had left it, and it had waited as he had planned it should wait when he wrote: "until such day as my own should be forever lost to me, or when my own should return to the quiet ways which had been mine, and my father's, and his father's before him."

His own had returned.

It took many days for West to adjust himself. He was silent and preoccupied. The collapse of his hopes had been sudden, but the process of that collapse required time to complete itself. The underpinning of his existence had been knocked out. At first, the superstructure had settled; then, one by one, the walls had caved in until gradually, surely, inevitably, every pillar and lath that he had built up with the sweat of suffering gave way, tottered, and took its final place on the mass of ruins. For West there was no going back, no rebuilding. The end had come, and he alone had been to blame. In his youth he had used defective materials, and, as the years went by, the strain of the edifice he had erected grew

too great. He was too old now, too full of weariness, to attempt a redintegration of the many units of his past. He had come back to the place from which he had started. He had described the cycle of his life's ambition, like a man lost in the desert, who had spent his energy and strength battling against an ever-increasing weakness and an ever-approaching death, toward the mirage of the horizon, only to find that in the end he had walked in a circle, and had come back, exhausted and defeated, to his starting point.

This feeling of final and hopeless surrender to the hidden motives of existence had its parallel even in the objective elements of his surroundings. Here were the old, familiar scenes in which he had first struggled into consciousness. It might have been yesterday that he had gone forth into the world. A hundred familiar details of his home came back to him with the vivid freshness of a recent experience. The house seemed only to have diminished in size. The dimensions of the rooms appeared smaller. The spaces in the yard, the distances between trees, the length of the path that led to the street —these had shrunk during the years of his absence. When he had last seen them, it was with the eyes and perspective of boyhood. As he had grown older, so had his sense of relative distances grown greater. But he soon became accustomed to the new proportions. His vision underwent a readjustment until at last it became normal again.

The growth of Greenwood had taken place in a distant quarter of the city: it had spread out on that side which was farthest from the river, so that the material surroundings of the neighbourhood to which West had returned retained their air of old familiarity. As he looked to the hills across the river, and to the top of Crow's Nest up which a yellow ribbon of path still stretched, his heart, like his vision, became transformed. He could see himself, once more a boy, standing meditatively on the crest

of the hill, dreaming wild, impossible dreams, thrilling with futile emotions at the dawn of his life's battle, exalted with resplendent visions of success. Turning again to the house, he half expected his father to appear in the doorway, or his mother to call to him from her room at the head of the stairs. Instead, the slender figure of a child ran toward him from the shadows of the dining-room. Then, of a sudden, his youth seemed almost a thing of antiquity—something he had known in a former incarnation, separated from his present self by centuries.

One night, as he sat alone in his father's study, glancing over many of the forgotten records of other years, he came across the diary of that gentle man who had been his first companion. He opened the book casually, letting his eye glance at items opposite dates which stood alone on the left-hand side of the page, separated from the main body of writing by a thin red line. For a while he read here and there, indulging in a retrospection which stirred the very springs of his sorrow. Here, before him, was the visible record of his youth. . . . How futile was all human effort! How much better it would have been had he entered the State College when he was still a young man! Now his father would never know that, at last, he had come back to the path of his tradition.

With sudden curiosity he turned the faded pages of the diary to the date of his birth, and read the entry opposite it: . . . "and in the hearts of your mother and of me, your father, will ever burn the desire that you will be upright and strong; that in your early youth you will show the promise of true greatness; and that, in your riper years, you will fulfil that promise to the honour of us who loved you and nurtured you."

His eyes were blinded with a burning mist. He heard the door open softly, and he closed the book with a feeling of shame and guilt.

Alice West came softly across the room to where he sat.

"Dear heart, I couldn't stay away to-night," she whispered, kneeling down close to him. "My peace seems greater than I can bear alone. . . . To think that we are here together again, united forever by a love which is greater than any suffering! It seems that I have waited and dreamed through an eternity for this moment. . . . And we shall be closer and dearer to each other for all we have gone through. . . . This home, after all, has been my real hope, even during our life in London—Oh, I shall be happier now than ever before. . . . Tell me, dear heart, that I am not foolish to believe that."

West's arm drew her to him; and, when she looked up into his face, he was smiling. She thought it was a sign of contentment. She did not know that behind his smile was a sense of unutterable and tragic irony.

THE END

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